

# Bard

Bard College  
Bard Digital Commons

---

Senior Projects Spring 2019

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

---

Spring 2019

## Curious Spawn in the Hotbed of Thought in Theogony

Will R. Kettner

Bard College, [wk2418@bard.edu](mailto:wk2418@bard.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2019](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2019)

 Part of the [Classical Literature and Philology Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

---

### Recommended Citation

Kettner, Will R., "Curious Spawn in the Hotbed of Thought in Theogony" (2019). *Senior Projects Spring 2019*. 169.

[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2019/169](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2019/169)

This Open Access work is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been provided to you by Bard College's Stevenson Library with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this work in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

# Bard

CURIOUS SPAWN  
IN THE HOTBED OF THOUGHT  
IN *THEOGONY*

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Classical Studies  
of Bard College

by  
Will Kettner

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2018



## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my advisor Robert Cioffi; and to Audrey Gilbert; warmest thanks to dearest friends who helped me through my tribulations: Lissy Darnell, Rhett Haver, Maggie Zavgren, Hannah Smith; and to my family.



## Table of Contents

I. Reverse Intellectual History with a Conspicuous Hole.....	7
II. Between Shepherd and Godking.....	25
III. A Method, the Sacrifice.....	36
IV. In Perpetuum .....	53
Works Cited.....	79



# I. REVERSE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY WITH A CONSPICUOUS HOLE

Die Ewigkeit hält sich in Grenzen.

Eternity stands within bounds.<sup>1</sup>

In 1936, in Germany, the aged Edmund Husserl was finishing the drafts of what in 1954 would first be published (still unfinished) as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*—an esoteric summons, of a sort, for intellectual posterity, to notice and to exercise a real, innate ‘vocation’ (though it might be called a meditation), which, he thought would free us from the tendencies embedded by a history of scientific thought; of technization, and the phantom, objectivity.<sup>2</sup> Critique is specifically centered about the invention of ideal mathematical-physical space, with the powerful statements of Newton (e.g. “Hypotheses?—I do not touch them”) and prominent forebears, inside of whose epoch we still mostly live; yet the roots and the ramifications of Husserl’s point are extensive. His very precise and indeed computational tone would decisively fall on its sword (were this not an address to ‘the lost,’ in their tongue) as he ends up discarding the Cartesian subject (‘the thinker’), and hunts out ‘transgressions’ in primal achievements of abstract conceptualization, or picturing. Here, I refer to what he calls the limit-shape: formal perfection, suggested though never directly

---

<sup>1</sup> Celan, (1971) The starting line of *Schneepart*’s final poem. Translations from German and Greek are my own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> My reference to this book and my quotations are through David Carr’s translation into English (1989).



encountered in myriad percepts and felt intuitions of actual things; or, the rudiment-tools of geometry.

Things of the intuitively given surrounding world fluctuate, in general and in all their properties: ... their identity with themselves, their self-sameness and their temporally enduring sameness, are merely approximate, as is their likeness with other things. This affects all changes, and their possible samenesses and changes....

There is a limit to what can be done by means of the normal technical capacity of perfecting, e.g., the capacity to make the straight straighter, ... but technology progresses along with mankind, and so does the interest in what is technically more refined; and the ideal of perfection is pushed further. ... Out of the praxis of perfecting, of freely pressing toward the horizons of *conceivable perfecting* “again and again,” limit-shapes emerge toward which the particular series of perfectings tend, as toward *invariant and never attainable* poles. If we are interested in these ideal shapes and are *consistently engaged* in determining them and in constructing new ones out of those already determined, we are “geometers....”

We now have an ideal praxis of “pure thinking” which remains exclusively within the realm of pure limit shapes. ... [they] have become acquired tools that can be used habitually and can always be applied to something new.<sup>3</sup>

The broad designation ‘geometer’ here comes across as a choice: as a preference of character, not an inevitability; hence this ‘geometry’ is an invention quite purely and not a discovery. Limit-shapes are of geometers, *not* of the field of their study: the space of the limit-shapes’ immanence would not exist were it not the response to a human decision and purpose, perhaps just a simple commitment or covenant on that the limit-shapes are. But the arbiter’s focus is elsewhere and other than *all* that belongs to it; all it is given.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Crisis* p. 25-26, emphasis mine.

*The Crisis*' focus remains, so to speak, on a wholly irreparable chasm between the allotments of life and a pure supposition of formal perfection—an active transgression, remote from its field: it applies to the world and is used in the world by a leap between natures, despite great effects that we live among.

... the free imaginative variation of this world and its shapes results only in possible empirically intuitable shapes and not in exact shapes.<sup>4</sup>

Positive, natural science in general—that which conceives of an infinite relevance, universality (formulae); laws of causality, 'spacetime' as plenum, objectively—all of this is the inheritance of such initial 'improper' decisions.<sup>5</sup> Though not so much of their results, since the technical method is always in process of being refined, as their motive or purpose, the whole *disposition* of natural scientists (physicalists, in the ancient expression). Historically, in actuality, humans adopted this search to reflect and to represent (therefore, to reach) the invariant poles, a conviction of which has no positive basis in fact, though it may in effect of persuasion and dizzying groupthink. The strength which permitted this 'error' to function, endure, and internally complicate, then, was the very same *truism* positive science believed to be managing, i.e. our limited mental capacities, mental oblivion: that we forget. And ironically, through our forgetting, the

---

<sup>4</sup> *Crisis* p. 49

<sup>5</sup> cf. Plato, *Cratylus*. 436d:

εἰ γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον σφαλεῖς ὁ τιθέμενος τᾶλλα ἤδη πρὸς τοῦτ' ἐβιάζετο καὶ αὐτῷ συμφωνεῖν ἠνάγκαζεν, οὐδὲν ἄτοπον, ὥσπερ τῶν διαγραμμάτων ἐνίστε τοῦ πρώτου μικροῦ καὶ ἀδήλου ψεύδους γενομένου, τὰ λοιπὰ ἀμύηλα ἤδη ὄντα ἐπόμενα ὁμολογεῖν ἀλλήλοις.

But if the arbiter primordially makes mistakes and tries to force all else into relation and require that it harmonize—it isn't a surprise. Why, in geometry, if there is just a tiny error, almost imperceptible at first, still all the rest will have to follow and support it.

purposive oversight of those incipient physicalists and geometers soon was effectively mimed and repeated as method, without some regard for its primary meaning, or for the substantial necessities, justifications and motives behind this pursuit; that is, outside, removed from, its novel and self-enclosed meaning-horizon.

Quite simply, choice became habit, and habit (in this case, a habit of reading or translating *all* that is given, by certain parameters) came to be pseudo-necessity. On a formidably large, but historically bounded trajectory—Husserl chronicles—humans effected a ‘final’ inversion of ideal and actual ‘space’ (i.e. total surrounds), and reversed their inherent relation of formative influence to one another. For now in fact idealized nature was thought *a priori* (a truth to be found, at the end of all findings), and nature, as ‘known’ in the most unaffected, the truly profoundest subjective awareness, was merely the indirect evidence of that historical, human construction, the space of ideals, for which there cannot be a direct attestation.

All occasional ... reflections which go from technical [scientific] work back to its true meaning always stop at idealized nature; ... not ... going back to the ultimate purpose ... growing out of prescientific life and its surrounding world ..., [in which] all knowledge of laws could be knowledge only of predictions, grasped as lawful.<sup>6</sup>

The apparent prevailing of positive science, in Husserl’s nightmare, amounts to a slow but imperial push to suppress and replace the immediate moment, and all its impressiveness unto itself. A more primal; a suffered, experienced space, where the choice would emerge to engage with ideals, with abstractions of quantity, quality, nomen;

---

<sup>6</sup> *Crisis*. p.51.

as also the choice or the promise to herald their immanence—this is suppressed (i.e. already seems to be chosen, supposed as necessity). Thus, the immediate, rather than being an arbiter's only allowance and proper (in no way a fantasy strengthened by widespread occurrence in culture; and not a pretension), becomes but the mediate space of translation, a means for the realm of ideals to inscribe its non-present arrangement, through which the ideals can be read. What is proper to us in our lives is thus only of indirect value; or, matters in reference to spatiotemporal sequence, its place is inscribed automatically into the thought of a self-enclosed whole having everything in it, beginning and middle and end.

That the formalized, ideal expressions must finally have to rest 'somewhere' eternal, from which *atopôî topôî* (Gr. "strange location") they serve to prefigure, and outlast the passing, phenomenal moment; that, therefore, experience settles in immanent reason—this kind of conviction, related to everything, *is* second nature, if no more conceived of as *krisis* (Gr. "choice"), as the unsettled matter we meet *in perpetuam* and which the sciences' promise avoids *in infinitum*.

+++

Once Charles Olson, in his customary manner steering in between the scholarly, monastic lucubration and the sudden, drunk epiphany, had confidently stated,<sup>7</sup> that the Hesiodic corpus was a fitting demarcation, for the ending of an epoch unfamiliar, nearly shrouded in its foreignness: the scene of its collapse into our own, "of modern history and politics,

---

<sup>7</sup> (1974) "A Work."

and science and literature, [etc]...” Less inclusive and adaptable, professedly more academic studies, in the modern era generally, have also looked to Hesiod as crucial in the history of intellect, as variously standing at the midpoint on a spectrum from Homeric and Platonic ‘understandings’ of the cosmos; or between the scientific and religious, the poetic and the logical. Most recently: the point between the dark age and the “era of philosophy and democracy in which “we,” i.e., “the Greeks and us” ... still live today.”<sup>8</sup> The tendency has been to see the birthplace of philosophy and rationalization in the poet: the beginnings of prioritizing form and formal meaning, over forces, viz. the force of an immediate impression; a beginning to the systematic reading of phenomena as indices of ever-present, rationally (and/or, supernaturally) structured oppositions. Now, such thinking so imbues, and leaves such great infectious monuments in nearly every spot of our communities, of waking life—it doesn’t seem to promise much, societally, questioning its basic, inmost verity. Indeed I cannot do so as a citizen; a member of a cause; or of a family; a personage—for I cannot contain this thought as property. The *Crisis*... as an artefact of work, is too ironically exemplary in systematic argument, precise in its abstraction, and consistent in its terms, to really satisfy its own adherents—yet, I would suppose that this could not have been avoided in the author’s own conception of his proto-deconstructive task.

Of course, the intellectual inheritance, the particular ‘European Sciences’ which Husserl regards—and which it is his aim to ‘see-without,’ to ‘live-without’—derive most recognizably from schools of thought and doctrinal assemblages that came into their own, in separate circles, in the Classical Age, Greece. The massive, influential pinnacles of

---

<sup>8</sup> Stocking (2017), esp. p. 386; 395.

Euclid, Plato—Husserl could not have overlooked; and yet these crystallized expressions have emerged and are emerging from a crucible of less self-conscience purposes, formidable in weak conventionality. Within the Greek Archaic age, the elements, the bulk of signs and energies; and many of the same concerns of scientific study (*epistêmê*) were awake and much in motion, only not as differentiated, specialized, or technically advanced. What seem to later ages fully incompatible concerns, along with various parameters and notional dominions, have been muddled in a hotbed of ambitions, as indeed the case of Hesiod makes clear. The very instruments of demonstration (proof, or explanation) are but tentatively, transiently suitable; in contrast, a communal science functions (sc. begins) from a significant degree of comprehensible consensus on an arbitrary, permanently overlaying meaning for an ‘instrument’—a ‘sign’ or ‘index.’

Hesiod performed (and it is likely that he also wrote, or dictated his verses to a scribe) around the outset of this prior age;<sup>9</sup> of course, an untold number of his themes and figures, ‘symbols’ have diverse and irrecoverable prototypes and predecessors. Hesiod’s *Theogony*, a somewhat rogue example of a ‘sacred text’ (see chap II), proposes that its speaker can ‘tell everything,’ and does so with a song of godly lineage, which starts “from the beginning.”<sup>10</sup> But, especially in reference to beginnings—of existence, life, divinity; the figures that originate the narrative—*Theogony* is multivalent, and without apology. Primarily, the early gods like Ouranos and Gaia (not exclusively) are not to be reduced to one (id)entity, but variously ‘are’ and are regarded, with the context:

sometimes, barely yet personified, the fabric of the cosmos in a naked sense encroaching

---

<sup>9</sup> West, M. (1982) suggests that the *Theogony*’s performance and its composition fall between 750-730 BCE. *The Works and Days* is almost certainly a later composition.

<sup>10</sup> N.b. thus the song of the *Theogony* is not the whole performance.

on the ‘natural’ or physicalist sciences; at other times, as deathless individuals, viz. humanoid, with ‘greater capabilities’ and terrible emotions; or, the quality or facet of another; or the figure for conceptual existences—and not to mention metaphor.

An illustration. Tartaros is father to Typhôeus at v. 821ff; despite that, throughout the immediate last hundred verses (v.720ff), his name was attached to a labyrinthine underground landscape, in which many monsters and gods have defined habitation, whose natural features are separately named. In this country of blackening mist—to which Typhôeus also ‘returns’ on defeat, as if into the space of the afterlife; even though this was his father—“in here,” in the darkness of Tartaros, “lie in good order the sources and outermost limits of Earth, and of Tartaros, Ocean, and Heaven.”<sup>11</sup> That Tartaros holds, in a tight little nook among others, the absolute boundaries and cause of himself in his (larger?) expanse—beyond doubt this is not yet the hardest epistemological barricade here introduced. These ambiguous *pêgai kai peirat* ‘the springs and the edges’ (the temporal limits; historical limits; material bonds of vitality?) certainly jar with the speaker’s much earlier claim (in the course of the same ‘revelation’) about the ‘beginning of all’ (v. 116ff), which however is also admittedly open to multiple ‘literal’ interpretations (i.e. of what actually happened).<sup>12</sup> *Theogony*’s self-pronounced ‘valid’ report of the cosmic-religious beginning—because of its minimal depth of description, and truncated syntax, would either make Tartaros one of the primary spawn of the

---

<sup>11</sup> *Theog.* v. 736ff. In this excerpt I’ve cut out all four of the epithets, as to be brief; but I note that the epithets seem to revolve around low visibility. ἔνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ ταρτάρου ἡερόεντος / πόντου τ’ ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος / ἐξείης πάντων πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατ’ ἔασιν.

<sup>12</sup> “The roots of the Earth and of Heaven” are furthermore separately mentioned in Tartaros (v. 728). Tartaros has so far been conceptualized as underneath the whole of earth, or underneath the surface, “at the distance that the Earth is far from Heaven;” (v.720) in an inmost hollow (*mychôî*, v. 119). Therefore as confined by, yet delimiting the Earth as god and cosmic body.

primal-thing Chaos, or else his own root-stock. The body of song begins, “Chaos first came into being” (v. 116, *prôtista Chaos genet*’); and “just then” a number of entities, names with their epithets, follow without any verb to denote derivation: they could be the ‘children’ of Chaos—or, like Chaos, have autogenesis. Gaia (Earth), Tartaros, Eros. And thereafter, Chaos’ bloodline is treated explicitly (v. 123, *ek chaeos*); and appears to stay separate from Earth’s, which predominates text and performance. The song of the gods has been thrice introduced, and thrice previewed: because it is really the song of the Muses, its contents are basically glossed in the opening verses (‘before the beginning’), which honor the Muses as wonderful archetypes of this (the speaker’s) performance, for so they perform in the houses of Zeus on Olympus (v. 43ff). And yet, there are troubling differences here between program and actualization: the song of the Muses, regarding beginnings, quite matter-of-factly makes no note of Chaos (or Eros or Tartaros); but, we are twice given warning that Gaia and Ouranos (sc. Earth and Heaven) engender the rest of creation as ultimate parents (see v. 43ff, and v. 105ff).

*Theogony*’s search for a fixed, irreplaceable cosmic beginning, a singular point to conclusively anchor the whole of the context (expressly, the audience’s and our own actuality, as divine-physical), bears an unpromising mark in the wake of these vague and provisional, inconsequential beginnings, and second beginnings, of *logos* or argument (cf. at v. 1 and v. 36: *archômetha*). The ‘real,’ as the context *Theogony* bears, is accordingly multiple, imprecise, fluid. The terms which initially notate the basic array of the (archaic) visible universe—Earth, who ‘gives birth to’ the hills and the ocean, etc.; Heaven, the starry—are gradually anthropomorphized: until, for example, the Earth (primogenitor)



travels and searches the earth for a refuge (at v. 479ff), and so on. The actual bodies, denoted inside of or underneath name-repetitions, are not then exclusively present, despite incongruity: rather, the dark and the misty foundations (of cosmos) pre-program a final resistance to definite form in the mind of the listener.

+++

Between 430-400 BCE, the sophist Gorgias applied the art of rhetoric—indeed a prided pastime of his culture—to present a subject equally abhorrent to the common mind as Husserl’s critique of ideality, perhaps, to a ‘geometer’. His epideictic feat and flourish, known as the *Encomium of Helen*, is an argument to scatter all the blame (*aitia*: cause, responsibility) from one of the most hated persons in the Greek foundational mythology. He does so by examining, in general, a number of our human incapacities. A more digressive branch of this extremely well-kempt argument proposes, that a captive of impressive speeches, taken in by words, can be no more considered guilty of misdeeds; and thereon Helen’s own absconding with a criminal will ground a much more general critique of the ambitions of contemporary science; and as an example, it finally stirs profound doubt whether anything reaching us mediately, indirectly, e.g. in a speech, is inherently worthy of trust.

εἰ μὲν γὰρ πάντες περὶ πάντων εἶχον τῶν τε παροιχομένων μνήμην τῶν τε παρόντων ἔννοιαν τῶν τε μελλόντων πρόνοιαν, οὐκ ἂν ὁμοίως ὁμοίος ἦν ὁ λόγος, οἷς τὰ νῦν γε οὔτε ... εὐπόρως ἔχει· ὥστε περὶ τῶν πλείστων οἱ πλείστοι τὴν δόξαν σύμβουλον τῇ ψυχῇ παρέχονται. ἡ δὲ δόξα σφαλερὰ καὶ ἀβέβαιος οὔσα σφαλεραῖς καὶ ἀβεβαίαις εὐτυχίαις περιβάλλει τοὺς αὐτῇ χρωμένους.

... πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς τῶν μετεωρολόγων λόγους, οἵτινες δόξαν ἀντὶ δόξης τὴν μὲν ἀφελόμενοι τὴν δ' ἐνεργασάμενοι τὰ ἄπιστα καὶ ἄδηλα φαίνεσθαι τοῖς τῆς δόξης ὁμμασιν ἐποίησαν·

If everyone had memories of each thing past, or consciousness of each thing present; knowledge too, of each to come—then *logos*, speech, would not be what it is. ... But that is not our fortune; most of us, in most of our affairs, supply the soul with recommended estimations—with opinions both infirm and overturnable, delivering to infirm, overturnable successes those relying on them.

... [one can understand this by example from] the doctrines of astronomers, who render the invisible—about which we cannot be sure—apparent to the eyes of thought, disposing one conception as they take in hand another.<sup>13</sup>

So, the limits of an individual's cognition would prohibit universals and objective truth, permitting only the emotionally overwhelming sense of these instead. A present power of persuasion does not 'at some point,' by arguing the heap (of data; sentences, and speakers) turn to revelation, nor to a reflection of objective truth. When lulled, or else coerced, into the thought and contemplation of objective measure, ultimate surrounds, and closed causation—still, the contemplating subject will remain in the amorphous, gloomy 'limits' of the mind, as accessed presently, and also the effects of their achievements will remain within those limits. Here, the *logos* merely acts as a peculiar force (impression) and as one among so many, on the subject, always temporary, transient—albeit as a force that serves to conjure up the the permanent, intangible idea (cf. the limit-shape). The choice (for you or me) to be engrossed in objectivity, its statements, has been likened in the larger speech to Helen's—in the 'clutch' of a seducer. Although Gorgias removes responsibility from Helen for adultery (the 'cause' of a defining war), in view of Alexander's planned display of *logos*-power—as an

---

<sup>13</sup> §11-13.

overwhelming power—I imagine nonetheless his average listener distrusted him, chose hatred over pity for a Helen who was mindful of ‘transgression,’ as was certainly traditional...

The field of human ignorance is primary and underived—in Gorgias’ view at least—it circumscribes and activates the field where, by our actions we engage with ideal systems, and with truth—despite the naïve sense that these engagements do in fact connect us to the immanence of scientific *logos*, as the source and the determinant, ‘the truth behind’ the objects we encounter, in the field of human ignorance. When Aristotle set about comparing and reviewing old beliefs about the origin of nature and the principles of change whereby the origin and present are contiguous<sup>14</sup>—he gifted the conviction of his scientific task to a preceeding age which did not fully share it. His assumption, that the systematic whole be comprehensible, necessitates that he avoid Anaximander, for example. Even though Anaximander wrote a prose cosmogony in abstract terms, his system was eternally confounded by the notion of “the boundlessness,” *to apeirôn*, as that which both “surrounds and guides” all nature, as its ultimate *archê*.

Although Anaximander cannot have meant more by the term [*archê*] than ‘beginning and origin,’ we shall have to raise the question whether the conception of an infinite *archê* does not necessarily carry beyond that signification.

—

Divinity is asserted of the *apeirôn*, not of existing things or ‘their ultimate constituents.’<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> *Metaphysics* 983b.

<sup>15</sup> Seligman, P. (1975). pp. 24; 54. The disagreement I am noting in the language and the thought of pre- and post-socratic, -scientific thinking has been thoroughly regarded in this work.

The *apeiron* has no beginning and no end. For Aristotle, presences (as objects) were a signature of qualitative alterations, leading from *the* origin, both working from and working toward a self-enclosed, contiguous totality. The notion of the *apeirôn* humiliates the analytic search for a conclusive meaning-fundament: since nothing which exists is its inscription, or a means of representing or approximating, demonstrating *apeirôn*. What could it even *mean* that it surrounds and guides all things? Indeed causation and its objects somehow recognized entirely would not engage it. As a whole, empiricism's purpose is schismatic and exclusionary: all refined successes in experiment and observation follow on (perpetuate) disinterest and suppression of the *apeirôn*.

The *archê* of a physicalist normally embeds—in fact, genetically attaches to—all being. True Anaximander's pupil, Anaximenes, would cancel the abysm in his teacher's thought, when claiming that the source of things was air, a substance, notionally infinite, but not beyond all comprehension. The anaximandrian 'idea' is not possessible nor soluble, and rather than composing and becoming the array of nature, this *archê* accompanies each moment and each object, though belonging to no particle of nature—still its problem is invisibly imposed, at every turn. Although in Aristotle's certainty, that so many observers of reality, *ta onta*, shared his motives; that their theories could be gathered and collected in a totalizing thrust—he had neglected the significance of boundlessness (which obviously does defy totality and singleness, non-contradiction), elsewhere, in the *Rhetoric*, he hits upon a more anaximandrian idea:

περὶ οὐδενὸς γὰρ ὠρισμένου οὐδετέρᾳ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη πῶς ἔχει,  
ἀλλὰ δυνάμεις τινὲς τοῦ πορίσαι λόγους.  
... μᾶλλον ἀπτόμενοι κατὰ τρόπον μεταβαίνουσιν ἐξ αὐτῶν  
ταῦτα δὲ ὅσῳ τις ἂν βέλτιον ἐκλέγεται τὰς προτάσεις, λήσει ποιήσας  
ἄλλην ἐπιστήμην ... ἂν γὰρ ἐντύχη ἀρχαῖς, οὐκέτι διαλεκτικὴ οὐδὲ  
ῥητορικὴ ἀλλ' ἐκείνη ἔσται ἣς ἔχει τὰς ἀρχάς.

As it is, neither Rhetoric nor Dialectic is really a science of definite things: they are powers of supplying oneself arguments.

...the more that people specialize and cling to an idea, the more they actually transgress these arts (of rhetoric and dialectic) ... They will then unconsciously have made a different science. ... Once you hit upon first principles [*archais*], then this is no more Dialectic, Rhetoric, but it will be the science whose first principles you hold.<sup>16</sup>

Rhetoric and Dialectic, active and generic powers, make each logic, each specific scientific study, make it possible. Within a realm of ignorance, and power by persuasion, speech-acts, broadly, both enframe and so inform (successive) realms of scientific truth. The power of the speech-act, though, has no inherent aim or end or object. To invent and then to settle on objective truth, as based in certain principles, the speaker must forget the versatility and freedom of an uninvented power (voice, *audê*) which has arisen of itself, and which does not have a proclivity for some specific form or for conclusion. As the nature (i.e. potency) behind the speech-act here becomes unconscious of itself (*lēsei*) the more that it is consciously prescribed as an instrument of reaching truth and knowledge, so the *apeirôn* enables and determine all that is—as well as all that is conceivable—in matter and in physics, yet remaining undisclosed and immaterial.

+++

---

<sup>16</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1356a, 1358a.

In Husserl, inheriting a ‘scientific method’ in the broadest terms, meant touting and enforcing the assumption that a permanently structured whole *was going to be found* which would account for every possible occurrence; which would underlie and circumscribe experience, the world of our experience, as *a priori*. Certainty, that scientific matters will be put to rest—recorded and transcribed by generations, over time— amounts to immanence of (some) complete and singular world-order (for its seekers), always thought to be at hand; and so a reference point for mundane operations. Thus the isolated moments of experiment and ‘theorizing,’ ‘legislating,’ have for their validity depended on a notion of the *destiny* of technical perfection for the method—as the ‘form’ of scientific *praxis* dreamt of in the dream of its progression to infinity....<sup>17</sup> A gorgianic thinker, who concedes to the unknown as an insoluble, impenetrable boundary, comprehends the long development of sciences, instead, as a bewildering postponement to infinity. But rather than imagining the reservoir of scientific knowledge as a promise and a right of our posterity (society), the skeptic sees a final volatility in method, contravention and disjunctiveness defining its momentum and trajectory. The skeptic might apply, in fact, to many, many scientific practices, those limiting conditions which, for Aristotle, mattered more distinctly in the practice of oration:

ἔστιν δὲ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῆς περὶ τε τοιούτων περὶ ὧν βουλευόμεθα καὶ τέχνας  
μὴ ἔχομεν, καὶ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἀκροαταῖς οἳ οὐ δύνανται διὰ πολλῶν  
συνορᾶν οὐδὲ λογίζεσθαι πόρρωθεν

Rhetoric’s work is with things about which we deliberate, but for which we have no system, technique; and before such an audience as is unable to see the whole picture or follow a very long argument.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> See *Crisis* p.40-42.

<sup>18</sup> *Rhetoric* 1357a.

Indeed the blatant limitations of the people—speaker, audience—essentially determine the effectiveness of momentary argument (*qua logos*), and especially of insubstantial argument relating to what lies beyond experience as present intuition. The cachets and the material impressiveness of physics or geometry, etc, would not affect this cognitive humility, this poverty of individual cognition. From the first, to follow scientific motivations and to humor their propriety implies, in fact, a tacit transformation of our dispositions, facing the unknown which both surrounds and interpenetrates all moments of awareness. Where a Gorgias—e.g.—propounds the unknown as unknowable societal determinant, the ‘scientist’ *par excellence* conceives of the unknown as immanently and inevitably knowable, and therefore as an object (which society determines rather freely). Still, this object—total object—would be always in suspended definition, and the impetus to demonstrate it cannot be the property of any individual in time—as individually cognizant, as witness. Its continual notation in the speech of individuals implies they have repressed their own conditions of awareness to participate in filling out the promises of some such institution.

+++

The ideals, the institutional concerns, the propositions and the formulae, possess of course an absolutely clarified relation to each other; and a fitness for the very same machinery. The problem, rather, lingers like a gap between this self-sufficient system of relations, in totality, and that in which we live, of world-experience. A speech-act, as an undetermined power, and as possible experience, precedes and so enables the decisive

separation of the world of our experience (pertaining to the witness) from the world of our communally determined understanding and our purposes (pertaining to occasional practitioners and members of a commonwealth). And once we mark the subtle prohibition, that the whole of ideal space or ideal nature cannot stand or have effect without some human motivation and exertion toward that end, that is, in reference to activity; that it cannot be thought of anymore as being latent or as immanent, a permanent existence of itself, a thing remaining in our absence but to which we can return without it altered... after that, the use of sciences on Earth becomes precisely as perplexing, as evocative and stunning, as persistence of religious code. Internally complex as either system may become, in terms of doctrine, both essentially connect the whole succession of experiential moments, each immediately verified, to something like the object of epiphany—a fiction and transgression, if not prophecy.

The problem of God clearly contains the problem of “absolute” reason as the teleological source of all reason in the world.<sup>19</sup>

An omnipresent context of immortal supervision is, at all times, *thought in spite of* an immediate perception and its intuition (curious exception: the epiphany of god). C. Geertz has theorized an oscillating process of induction and deduction, in the spreading of religious ideology, where lurid or astonishing ‘expressions’—things definitively—met with in a choreographed ritual, could thereupon affix themselves as symbols (if provisionally, still expecting repetition) somewhat more than merely self-indicative (the cross, e.g., the fire). And the ‘message’ or the meaning which such symbols brought to light would now accompany the people (sometime actors in a ritual) as foil and

---

<sup>19</sup> *Crisis* p. 9.



determinant for commonplace experience (phenomena now taken to affirm and deepen sense of form or principle).<sup>20</sup> The Greek verb *theoreo*—which most basically connotes an act of watching—serves to indicate how simply and subtly the function of the senses is coopted into reading and interpreting the unknown-as-the-immanently-knowable. Transmuted by its frequent use, the verb would come to indicate a purposive excursion to an oracle of god—the very traveling to enter a secluded zone of prophecy; and also, for the academics: speculation, mental sight, departed from its influences.

---

<sup>20</sup> Geertz (1966).

## II. BETWEEN SHEPHERD AND GODKING

ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,  
ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,  
ἴδμεν δ' εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

Sorry disgraces, you men in the fields, in the pastures—mere stomachs!  
So great are the lies we can speak as reality,  
And, if we wish, we can herald the truth.<sup>21</sup>

If we are to trust his own report, the shepherd Hesiod received, in an encounter with the Muses, the ability to reconstruct the story of the cosmos from its ultimate beginning, by divine articulation<sup>22</sup>—and in verses. The derridean and classicist Pietro Pucci well explains the idiosyncratic situation of the poet's truth as rooted in the figure(s) of the Muses, Zeus' daughters with Mnemosyne (or "Memory").<sup>23</sup> The Muses' own facility for demonstrating truth (expressly, *alêthea*)—only mentioned *post* their liability and skill in making falsity appear to be reality—would not equate in fact to the reality, of truth's becoming property for Hesiod, or anyone that listens to him. What the Muses witness and regard by *supernatural* cognition is sequestered from their words by the enigma of their own capricious language-power (see above). And *if*, in terms of truth, their whole expression is equivocal; and all we have to indicate their general demeanor is a condescending scoff addressed at Hesiod and fellows—then as poet he forsakes (i.e. there no more is) self-consciousness directed at the speech-act of his demonstration—if it would be true. For, like his audience, the poet cannot properly escape a lifelong struggle

---

<sup>21</sup> *Theog.* v. 26-8.

<sup>22</sup> *audên thespin.* Idem. v. 31ff.

<sup>23</sup> (Pucci, 1977) esp. chapters 1 & 4.

with prediction and uncertainty; have any more than dis/belief toward datum reached by mediation, phrases, measures, instruments, although it come from deities. For conscious judgment—that which does the mediating—therefore for the poem’s observers:

the locus of truth (i.e., the “original”) is always absent and manifests itself only in discourse. ... The presence of things as they are does not manifest itself in any other way than ... imitation, or representation.<sup>24</sup>

Where Pucci finally considers that the *faith* of Hesiod, as individual—“the Muses haven’t lied in what they told me, even though...”—transcends the whole of the dilemma, that to aim at truth by mediation is, to some extent, the work of falsifying;<sup>25</sup> I may rather choose myself to picture, that the Muses speak where Hesiod appears to speak. They literally *breathe inside him* (*enepneusan*). Probably, possession (inspiration) of a shepherd, not the faith, of an already somewhat tried and practiced poet, for example, is at issue. Shortly, Hesiod disowns the situation of his life as insignificant (*alla tiê moi* v. 35), facing now the ‘total’ and eternal situation which the Muses “make him sing about” (*kai m’ ekelonth’ ymnein* v. 33). Indeed all usage here of the first person (singular and plural) has some mystery. Though Hesiod’s decision to announce himself by name (and to depict his earthly livelihood) is striking, in relation, for example, to the anonymity of the Homeric poems—we notice that the voice within the poem has taken Hesiod (its vessel)

---

<sup>24</sup> Pucci p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Products of a mediating praxis (*technê*) could not have identity with what they aim to represent, or quantify, or index. But at best, and by the best technique, a signifier—ultimately severed from the signified as *autos* is from *heteros*, persuades (sc. overpowers) or escapes the reader’s censure, as a counterfeit of something-else-not-evident. As long as we have aimed at things (reality) by mediating *praxis*—which itself is the suffusion of experience by thought—the ontic issues of the selfsame and the different (*auto-*, *hetero-*) identity and otherness, will seem to be connected, by a spectrum from dissimilar to similar (so, issues of discernment and reflection). [*cf.* Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen über die Farben*, wherein the thinker problematizes comparison of colors, and the recollection/imagination of a color not now seen.] Analogous would be to think of truth and falsehood (notions free of doubt) connected by the spectrum of persuasive, non-persuasive (states submerged in doubt).

for its object: *they taught Hesiod a stunning song*. The presence of his name suggests ironically a distance from himself, in fact the speaker's non-identity with Hesiod, while speaking.

In privation from the shepherd, and away from their pastoral home, the Muses have a single, total narrative (a synchronized, synoptic song), with which they entertain their father:

ὕμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου,  
εἴρουσαι τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,  
φωνῇ ὁμηρεῦσαι, τῶν δ' ἀκάματος ῥέει αὐδὴ.

They so love to serenade the wondrous mind [of Zeus] within Olympus, and in speech accord, to link together present, past, and future; running voices theirs, that have no rest.<sup>26</sup>

Because it had been mentioned only several lines before,<sup>27</sup> the poet's curious omission of "the present" from the program of his parallel performance (the *Theogony* itself) is not exactly inconspicuous. The song cannot engage 'what is,' *ta eonta* (which translates in a later philosophical expression to *reality*); although it touch, in theory, the surrounding framework, *qua* complete, objective time, with gods as objects, or as subjects, 'old enough' to populate and structure such a time (viz. *genos aien eontôn*, v. 33). From the perspective of the audience, or Hesiod returning to himself in some reflection, the belabored contiguity of signifiers making up the song does not possess the truth in evidence but only in suggestion, premonition. That the signified objectively exists is as

---

<sup>26</sup> v. 37-9.

<sup>27</sup> v. 32: *That I would sing the future, and what came before what is.*

impossible to evidence *by signifying* (tools of imitation, i.e. counterfeits) as it would be to evidence that Hesiod is actually the Muses' ninefold symphony, and is no more himself.

In fact, the notion that indefinitely higher seats of knowledge (e.g. Muses) can illumine for themselves the total cosmos, *and* that they can then inspire human beings, grants an immanence to truth and order—just as did the physicalist sciences in 'endlessly' constructing ideal physics as (provisionally!) *a priori*. Yet, there is no point applying method, no construction of the poet's inspiration. What *Theogony* refers to as the truth—in the possession of the Muses, who belong to the immortal order they themselves reveal—does not at all depend on, or respond to, human purpose. Like and unlike Gorgias and Aristotle both, the shepherd-poet would affirm a total order, not affirming that a human individual can capture or express awareness of it, or its pieces, by the fullness of the *logos*.

In the model of divine possession, *ta eonta*, nature undistorted, un-misunderstood, perpetually camps outside the consciousness, the essay and experiment. The use of song first figures in the poem as part and parcel of a stunning disappearing act, by which the (so far, silent) Muses rise and leave the *topos* of Mt. Helikon, for somewhere past the limits of our physical capacity for travel: Mt. Olympus. So emphatically, the singing of the poem begins "From Muses of Mt. Helikon" (*Musaôn Helikoniadôn* v.1). Mostly engrossed in the art of subsistence, and busy directing his animals (scene of 'mere stomachs'), the shepherd is simply taken in love with the sight of the Muses: their quickness and freedom in games (in their nakedness dancing, expressive, unresting).

However, as the story of the Muses, of their songs, and of the poet's inspiration is developed, their defined affiliation with Mt. Helikon evaporates, in view of a connection to Olympus, and the head of the Olympians: *for there, they have their splended dances...* (v. 63). The epithet Olympian occurs at v. 25, when first they speak; and at v. 50-3, as they recite the tale of humankind to Zeus; v. 62-7, as they sing the customs and the laws of the immortals; and at v.114, as they describe the cosmic order Zeus established, centered on himself, the foremost object of their song and of *Theogony*. But they are no more known as Helikonian.

αἱ τότε ἴσαν πρὸς Ὀλυμπον, ἀγαλλόμεναι ὅπῃ καλῇ,  
 ἀμβροσίῃ μολπῇ· περὶ δ' ἴαχε γαῖα μέλαινα  
 ὕμνεύσαις

They traveled to Olympus, then, exalted in their stunning voices,  
 their immortal measure; and the dark earth  
 echoed music.<sup>28</sup>

As they first begin to sing (v.9), the so alluring and elusive, private spectacle of dancing, the percussion of their rapid feet against the earth of Helikon, gives way to an invisible (and inexplicable) ascent to Mt. Olympus. *Aêr*, void, is somehow fit to cover them. Their singing is a transport from “an altar of Zeus Kronides,” symbolic, human-made construction, straightforward to their father and the king of gods and humankind himself. For both the reader and the shepherd, then, Olympus is aloof and inaccessible. And almost like a Bodhissatva, Hesiod remains within that *topos* which the Muses condescend to and transcend: of mental poverty confined to the elaborate productions of derridean

---

<sup>28</sup> v. 68-70.

deferral (*in infinitum*) of meaning—of a god within our altars of ambiguousness; object of our song.

Indeed the metamorphic journey of the Muses to Olympus would appear to be the poet's first imaginative leap beyond his actual surrounds and understanding. Yet again, the short vignette ("all this") is deemed to be, in retrospect, the Muses' singing (v. 75); thus the poet's present has been seamlessly dissolved into the absolute perspective of the narrative. As also in the *Phaidôn*, and as keystone in the doctrine of Platonic forms, the thought of a perspective of omniscience redefines the present actions of analysis and inquiry, that they become mere subsets of remembering. The poet's very ego, with the present of performance, is suppressed, becomes translucent unto some objective incident the Muses grant a spurious reality. Precisely this decisive power (truth-determination) would appear to be, moreover, an extension of their father's most iconic feat, first mentioned here in preview of the climax of the poet's song: "distributing of systematic order, and proclaiming valuation for each deathless thing."<sup>29</sup>

*Accessus* to the organizing mind (within Olympus) and the effable omniscience of the Muses, here depends on self-suppression, a suppression of the present as the center of (the suffering) experience. The Muses' theoretical omniscience—in the manner of the 'immanence' of ideal space, objective time, for later Western thinkers—has been substituted, somewhat surreptitiously, as field of observation, for the plenum of the moment of the intuition. Hesiod's *Theogony* though differs from the history of natural *scientia*—if, as it claims, the immanent and total picture stems not from the self and from

---

<sup>29</sup> v. 74 *athanatois dietaxe nomous kai epephrade timas*.

a purposive endeavor but from independent, unembodied sources (and by dubious connection). The divide between the shepherd's and the godking's mountain homes remain uncrossed; and objectivity, though granted, must remain beyond the efforts of the human mind to touch and comprehend, or to transcribe.

The Muses' lovely single-mindedness (*homophronos*), prefigures the ideal of our societal consensus as the 'basis' of all truth in discourse; notably, this makes them as efficient in recording and retelling (making patent), as in simultaneously suppressing, or confining to oblivion, the thoughts within another's mind. "Mnêmosyne bore the nine Muses [to serve as] *lêsмосyne* [as overlooking, forgetting] of troubles, surcease of concern" (v. 53f). We are told that the very same power, conferred upon humans by Musaïc favor, essentially makes the political strategist potent; and furthers the stolid persistence of law in confronting an unruly citizen body (v. 84-90). The perpetuation of each institutional standard and practice—conformity as ideal life of the state, from the viewpoint of power (*archê*)—would rely on an equal degree of continual (choosing of) self-abnegation, a mortification of psyche. The absolute selflessness I have attributed here to the poet, allows for the notion that some (non-translatable) knowledge of objective truth has resulted through indirect channels in Hesiod's poem.

The order of the signified is never contemporary, it is at best ... discrepant by the time of a breath.<sup>30</sup>

+++

---

<sup>30</sup> Derrida (1998), p. 18.



The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological....<sup>31</sup>

Historical analysis can only more confound and make more baffling the speaker's attestation of divine possession.<sup>32</sup> M. L. West, a scrupulous interpreter as well as 'archaeologist' of Hesiodic poetry, persuasively suggests, that the *Theogony* was written for performance; i.e. probably compiled, drafted, edited—set down; and might well owe its form to many moves in *longue durée*, not ecstasy. The written work was not at all familiar nor expected,<sup>33</sup> the performance falling roughly between 730-700 BCE. We might indeed consider that a number of the myths involved were more familiar then, than was the notion of the text. The poem's performance, had *its* model in a history of institutional (communal) action and expression, on the other hand. Throughout the ancient world, a kind of 'literature' which West decides to label theogonic (whether written or retained by word of mouth) appeared in myriad performances of ritual, integral to the ritual's efficacy in putting gods and humans into dialogue. In general, a chronicle of gods 'from the beginning' (*ex archês*), its recitation, momentarily, at least—would light the path which has arrived at the performance, at the present: what is taken for reality.<sup>34</sup> A well-rehearsed and choreographed 'placing' of the ritual's participants—their

---

<sup>31</sup> Idem, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, "The Offence" esp. pp. 96-99. Trans. Lowrie. Where he says, of Christ:

... we must begin with not knowing who He is, that is to say, in the situation of contemporaneity with an individual man, who is like other men, in whom there is nothing *directly* to be seen, an individual man who thereupon performs a miracle and himself says that it is a miracle he performs. What does this signify?

<sup>33</sup> (West, 1982) p. 44-47.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 1f

present, as minutely comprehensible to each—within the ‘revelation’, nonetheless made firm in a tradition with intentions of societal posterity.

*Theogony*, the poem, was not explicitly a part of solemn rite,<sup>35</sup> however serious and formal of an interest it displays in these ‘religious’ goals. The poet enters, certainly less potent in his image than the king or wealthy ‘noble’ who would volunteer, for instance, as a leader in communal rite of sacrifice, to conjure up the gods’ attentions. Hesiod, with closer to the credibility of an Odysseus, *qua* washed ashore, retells before a crowd of individuals, how he alone met Muses and received the voice of gods. Indeed, why him? Why choose this shepherd? Though the Muses’ will is surely uninterrogable (which is in itself a reason), their existence anyway still hangs upon the shepherd’s self-pronounced ‘inspired’ telling, which by nature is untestable. By exiting the setting of the concentrated, ritual and prayer (and at the same time by so dimly, enigmatically portraying the demeanor of the Muses) the *Theogony*’s ‘ambassador’ or speaker only ushers in a greater conscious criticism, questioning the source of speech.

In lieu of singer’s instrument, he brandishes the *skêptron* of the Muses, which indeed comprises all substantial proof of that encounter. As a marker, being gifted on the instant of the transference of singing-power, this unique example of a *skêptron*, “a stupendous, leafy branch” (*daphnês eritheleos ozon, ... thêêton*, v. 30) “of bay or laurel,” was to bear the weight of proof for its possessor’s total knowledge. Truly, absent this as trusted token, all would rest, and so does rest, on power of persuasion. For the carrying of *skêptrâ* could traditionally indicate a diverse range of offices, of functions and of ranks. As yet

---

<sup>35</sup> Idem, p. 15-16

unqualified by context, it was that which someone held while making claims, that is, regardless of their aptitude to govern or to educate. Displacement of the text from a religious context (choreographed ritual) has robbed the branch of ‘possible’ symbolic and authoritative force. Although the document retains the formal content of a theogonic utterance in general—transformed as it relates now to an audience of fellow human beings, the poem’s performance would expose its own condition as unverified, suspicious and insoluble; and not forget, as other breeds of speech forget, that argument cannot transcend persuasion.

So, despite that the *Theogony* has merited (and merits, consequentially) a formative position in relation to the Greek religious universe; appears to have done half of all the work in making gods a point of thought and conversation, at the dawn of our distinctive Western politics and culture,<sup>36</sup> it appears to have been drafted in response to an existing form; and not as a conventional example, but exemplary as reformation, self-critique. The need for; the efficacy of certain formal instruments for ‘reaching’ the divine is here implicitly on trial. The impressive externalities, the trappings of a sacrificial rite, are under scrutiny as such; are introduced in such a way as should encourage our discretion: it remains to be disclosed if they are forces of contrivance that enable ideologies to circumvent or overwhelm the judgment. This most helpless ambiguity extends to the entirety of Hesiod’s performance, such that gods are irreducibly considered both as catalysts of culture and as products of the same; so that *Theogony* will vacillate in nature and in worth, between an ultimate, impersonal achievement of the grounds of the

---

<sup>36</sup> see Herodotus, *Histories* II.53.

experiential present, or the ultimately groundless application of societal constructions, as  
obscurant of reality, impediment to true perception.

### III. A METHOD, SACRIFICE

Ourselves within the tune, as if in space,  
And nothing changed, except the place...<sup>37</sup>

In light of the *Theogony*'s apparent 'abdication' from the setting of the rite, as from an architected atmosphere, a pre-designed potential for experience—the narrative, within the poem, which tells of the invention of the sacrificial custom (v. 535ff) takes on infinite allure; the speaker puzzlingly hides the very origin of humankind within this revelation of the origin of custom. Human beings are already at a gathering with gods, when they appear: as yet their origin has nowhere been described, despite the poem's overt obsession with beginnings, etiology. Instead, as 'new beginning,' second origin, the learning of the sacrificial custom from Prometheus delivers them to punishment by Zeus: an irrevocable reforming of their nature and their quality of life, with the creation of (Pandora as)<sup>38</sup> the proto-woman.

Next to the dramatic and sensorial description of the proto-woman, crafted out of earth and water, clothed in hammered silver, gold, and made to fit the king of gods' designs (*hikelon Kronideô dia boulas*, v. 572)—certainly the silence of the speaker on the nature of humanity before this point is onerous and troubling. They do not have material or formal cause; they do not have a past. In fact the dawn of human nature, *as we know it*, is the granting of momentum to a project of occlusion: not creation, but abrupt

---

<sup>37</sup> Wallace Stevens, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, vi.

<sup>38</sup> She is not so named in the *Theogony*, but only in the copy (reformation) of this story, as it figures in *The Works and Days*.

adjudication on an uncreated, undetermined thing, to fix and alter it; the loss of that unqualified, yet definitely prior state, in any case, to one ordained, a prescript: to ‘miscegenate’ with god’s contrivance (proto-woman).

Later Greek attempts to reimagine the invention of the sacrifice—particularly, as it stands in Hesiod, the animal, blood-sacrifice—concluded in like manner with a proto-legal utterance (“From now on...”). However, the immortals, in these stories, rather pardoned the caprice, the independent and unsupervised decisions of a mortal, who without explicit template or example, chose to sacrifice an animal.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, humankind in the *Theogony*, both mutely and impassively, inherits a divine invention. Truly incidental, in this theocentric record, to a narrative digression on the devious exchanges of Prometheus and Zeus, the proto-humans have no action in the crime for which they too are punished; no iconic figure, no emotional response. The poem’s speaker grants them only but a couple passive states—i.e. modalities of being—namely, being-set-apart from the immortals; being-awestruck at the spectacle of proto-woman. These two excerpts represent the opening and closing of the action in this episode, which I will call ‘the sacrifice’ for short. Within the grammar of these sentences, the mortal situation is inseparable, not yet independent from the gods (but they co-operate *in verbum*).

καὶ γὰρ ὅτ' ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι  
Μηκώνῃ, τότε ἔπειτα μέγαν βοῦν πρόφρονι θυμῷ  
δασάμενος προύθηκε, Διὸς νόον ἐξαπαφίσκων.

This was when mortals and gods took their separate positions, at  
Mékônê: that day [Prometheus] placed a great ox before everyone, which,

---

<sup>39</sup> Instead of something vegetal; inanimate like incense. For the stories, see Naiden’s Essay “Polis Religion and Sacrificial Regulation” (Hitch & Rutherford 2017).

in a buzzing of thought he had cut up already, to overwhelm Zeus' intelligence.<sup>40</sup>

—

θαῦμα δ' ἔχ' ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητοὺς τ' ἀνθρώπους,  
ὥς εἶδον δόλον αἰπὺν, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν. (v. 588-9)

Wonder then held the immortals, the gods, and the mortals, the humans—because they had looked on an utter deception [i.e. proto-woman], which humans cannot figure out.<sup>41</sup>

In general, the speaker has quite intricately 'broken up' and reconstructed time, within the sacrifice (divergent from the linear and non-disjunctive mode of genealogy which governs the *Theogony*)—such that the reader regards the entire, millenia-long retribution of godly Prometheus, prior to any connection he carries to mortal humanity (v. 521-34). Basically, Zeus' response to another immortal's direct provocation (the paradox that he would first of all wish to be beaten, deceived by a god; to ingeniously punish, and later to temper his anger at same)—this preeminent narrative arc is completed before it develops a meaning for all of humanity. More, Epimetheus—well to the contrary of his appearance in *Erga kai Hêmera*,<sup>42</sup> barely has narrative presence: he seems to exist, for the nonce, so that Mêkônê's mortals do not have to put forth an actor or personage, even to bear their own verdict. For nothing quite clarifies how, after taking 'Pandora,' the god Epimetheus passes this punishment on to humanity.

---

<sup>40</sup> *Theog.* v. 535-7

<sup>41</sup> v. 588-9

<sup>42</sup> I should have liked to compare the remarks of this paper in general to the few opening myths of the other, less godly, more pragmatic work of the author. The bond of these works, which is patent at first because both have their 'versions' of how human beings were given Pandora, has much to be said for it. On this occasion I simply note that in *Erga kai Hêmera*, Epimetheus actually figures in the narrative, literally forgetting the warnings of his brother Prometheus; privately falling for the spectacle of Pandora. In *Theogony*, the god's reception of Pandora first occurs outside and eighty lines before the narrative, as sidenote in the work of genealogy; but in the myth, there isn't any reference to it.

Typically, as has been noted, theogony inside the context of rite (viz. accompanying or described by a sacrifice) grounded the present occasion within a (divine or religious) totality, which was the whole of its content. Subjective (viz. human) experience wedded itself to the thought of a certain ‘beyond and before,’ of the which it became an interpreter, over and over, and probably less and less consciously. But, the *Theogony*’s speaker, in act of revealing an outermost frame to experience, casts to oblivion what were the roots of humanity: for, in the self-enclosed whole of *Theogony*’s cosmos, the humans are not of the gods’ cerebrations and have no discernible genesis; but they collide with the realm of the (text of the) gods from unspecified regions. As such, they are helpless accessories, all unreflectively bound to immortal offense and revenge. If the gods had created them, and if the humans themselves had committed the crime... then the myth would have closely prefigured ‘The Fall’ as in *Genesis*. Here is no Eden, however; and here the damnation is solely by dint of defection among the immortals themselves (the *Theogony*’s proto-humanity is not deceived and need not be).

The compact of mortals and gods has begun, for the Greeks, with the fall and *vice versa*. The scene of the feast would appear to imply repetition, tradition, a definite history of interaction for mortals and gods, but the notion of any alliance or culture has not been established; only dissolved, in the poem. Although J.-P. Vernant may extrapolate much on the nature of humans before this occasion at Mêkônê,<sup>43</sup> as it appears in the sanctified words of the poem: they begin to relate to immortals by being removed from immortal

---

<sup>43</sup> (Vernant, 1987) He imagines them feasting with immortals over and over before this point, having no death or health problems, etc. Most of this is taken out of *Works and Days* directly, or Vernant is simply reading too prosaically with manifold enhancements by his ‘common sense.’



society (see v. 535 above: “*ekrinonto*,” the verb by which humans have entered *Theogony*, sets them apart from the gods; this division will prove to be lasting). Prometheus’ trick—of cutting up and reassembling the pieces of an animal, is simultaneously the beginning of damnation for humanity *and* archetype for mortals to beseech the gods’ good will.

... κακὰ δ' ὅσσετο θυμῷ  
 θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισι, τὰ καὶ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλε.  
 ... χάσατο δὲ φρένας ἀμφί, χόλος δέ μιν ἵκετο θυμόν,  
 ὥς ἴδεν ὀστέα λευκὰ βοῶς ...  
 ἐκ τοῦ δ' ἀθανάτοισιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ φῦλ' ἀνθρώπων  
 καίουσ' ὀστέα λευκὰ θυηέντων ἐπὶ βωμῶν. (v. 551-67)

For mortal human beings, Zeus imagined ruin; he would make it so. His thought was rancorous, and anger took his spirit: he had seen the ox’s whitish bones. ...

And ever since, societies of human beings roast the whitish bones for the immortals, on the smoking altars, all across the land.

The very root, then, and the cause of the im/mortal schism, acted out *sine fine* in rituals, has opened up a window through which gods and humans speak and feed relations. So, an instance of (commemorating) sacrifice at least appears to bridge the gap which sacrifice in general has opened irrevocably.<sup>44</sup> Without the slightest inkling of a past, the human being stands in reference to immortals from now on, and too distorted as a consequence of their so clearly cruel but petty games; which human destiny must copy. Rendering this or that animal matter to nothing but fuel for the fire and smoke of the altar, a Greek individual thinks of and acts in regard to, enables an ancient and ongoing project of parallel though incompatible cultures—as far as *Theogony* sees it.

---

<sup>44</sup> Vernant (1989) has said as much p. 24, 35.

+++

A. Henrichs and others have recently urged for substantial revision of 20<sup>th</sup> Century classical scholarship's major approaches to polytheism and rite in Greek *poleis*. The anthropocentric concerns (which proceeded from Freud and through Burkert) of animal killing and eating; of human emotion, anxiety; politics—which in the 20<sup>th</sup> C. dominate critical focus—are now in some places redacted as not-so-well-closeted atheist, or at best modernist judaeo-christian perspectives. The analysts' predispositions are seen to effect the collecting and reading of evidence.<sup>45</sup> Firstly, in modernist interpretation, the ancient belief in the being of gods and immortals is easily labeled a subsequent fact to the presence of human contrivance, a product of primary, human behavior. However,

From a Greek point of view, the gods not only existed prior to the rituals practised in their honour but were regarded as the ultimate *raison d'être* for these rituals. Indeed, Greek texts and vase paintings represent gods ... engaged in ritual performance as 'first inventors,' ... and thus as divine role models for the human practitioners. ...

It is neither practical nor advisable to study the two entities separately.<sup>46</sup>

F. Naiden more recently (2013) set an alternative standard in 'ritual' sacrifice theory (which de-emphasizes the term), in his basic assertion that complex arrangements of ritual action are always determined by states in an unbroken context of actual gods, as observers and judges (thus following Henrichs contention that ancients were *actually*

---

<sup>45</sup> S. Georgoudi, F. Naiden, Van Straten, etc, separately question the popular themes of the victim's willingness; human regret; the centrality of killing in the rite; that sacrifice preceded every meat-consumption; that the animal, blood-sacrifice was oftenest applied....

<sup>46</sup> Henrichs, "What is a Greek God?, from *The Gods of Ancient Greece*," (Bremmer & Erskine, 2013), p. 26

polytheistic). The actors, performers of sacrifice, knew (or assumed) the immortals remembered their previous dealings: immortals had, so to speak, written a permanent record of contact with these individuals, who in performance adjusted decorum and prayer in accordance with that divine-personal narrative-history—at least, as far as the ritual actors remembered or else comprehended it. Often participants asked for a change in the future, and promised to sacrifice later as well; and in this manner each individual “sacrifice became comprehensible as part of a sequence—as an episode, not a self-contained event.”<sup>47</sup> As Sarah Hitch has noted in review of Naiden’s recent book, reorienting focus to an omnipresent context of immortals makes a functionable model for assessing a diverse array of sacrificial rituals: before becoming muddled in typology and categorization, they are always and most basically communicative gestures, conversations of the mortal generations with the “γενοϋ αἰεν ἔοντων.”

Regardless of the victims (Gr. *ta hiera*), whose pathos so engrossed the vogue in scholarship on Greek religion, Naiden’s sacrificial model only sees the feeding of the fire, that it smoke upon the altar, as essential and a critical determinant. The *knîsa*, or the scent of burning offerings, assumed to reach the gods, aesthetically (by metaphorical transference) would embody human prayer, in its arising and diffusing “in the larger scene, the context in which... god responded.” Answers could be ‘read’ in things, deciphered by a motley of divinatory practices applied to different elements, again within the confines of the rite: e.g. the color of some nodule on a liver served to indicate immortals’ dispositions, indirectly.

---

<sup>47</sup> Naiden (2015), p. 25.

Prometheus' sacrificial 'offerings'—a choice between the heartiest of ox-meat, yet concealed within an unbecoming stomach-pouch, and all the ox's bones, yet covered over by a tempting skein of fat—these 'portions' instigate a crisis of ontology and semiotics. Very much persistently, the episode has figured through the history of structuralist and deconstructive discourse,<sup>48</sup> not alone because its theme of the antinomy (or else non-correlation) of apparent and essential value, ties the trick of sacrifice directly to the semiotic quandary of the shepherd with the Muses' voice, that truth is not accessible directly (and since structuralist theory was devoted to linguistic theory). Even though the trick does not itself involve a prayer (of course the proto-humans do not ask for anything), still Zeus has been solicited as reader or interpreter: his answer is impatiently anticipated in the very gesture of the offering.<sup>49</sup> What *choreographed* happenings appear to be, is yet to be determined by the status of the 'reader' in relation to a 'secretive society,' composed of the initiates in latent meaning: that which will appear in 'last analyses,' if such exist. The sign (device of signifying) carries meaning fully independent and regardless of a signified.

And like the sign the choice of Zeus quite inexplicably occurs in perpetuity, or permanence: it is the *form* of sacrifice—forever, since the first and for posterity. Or otherwise the action of Prometheus impends its repetition by our generations (not that this was part of some explicit wager made with Zeus before the choice; it seems to be

---

<sup>48</sup> Stocking (2017).

<sup>49</sup> *prophroni thumôi* v. 536; and v. 547-50: Prometheus' eagerness.

inevitable). Thus the grotesque portions of the ox prefigure all the indirect (or semiotic) means of human-god communication. We recall that humans have arrived at the immortal context (that of the *Theogony*, the world that it reveals or else constructs) by being placed at a remove from it, and at the same time, ‘sentenced’ by the opening of sacrificial custom to an active, frequent maintenance of bonds across this distance. An eternal, existential wall or else abyss constitutes the self-enclosed relation of im/mortals—as it always presupposes some translation, force of mediation. Here, it is the altar-fire.<sup>50</sup> Oftentimes, the altar-fire and the logos (prayer and theogonic song). Or else, as here, the logos unaccompanied (*Theogony*).

Scholars like Burkert, Vernant, Detienne—who have hugely affected the common opinions of ancient Greek ritual (and of religion in general); anthropocentric (viz. psycho- and sociological) writers—would have to ignore, or manipulate details within the *Theogony*’s relevant, certainly formative evidence, if they would hold to their deepest and broadest convictions (hypotheses and suppositions). In terms of the rite of the sacrifice, elements 20<sup>th</sup> C. scholarship duly examined—the human participants, facing an animal victim, or meal—are of barely peripheral interest in Hesiod’s text. As aside from the general, miniscule weight of humanity in the *Theogony*’s telling (in terms of both action and suffering; already mentioned)—the subtle discretion displayed by the speaker effects that no action of killing or eating expressly occurs in the narrative. Far from a feast, the creation of only two portions (the meat is not carved for a meal as in Homer) suggests that the *krisis*, the judgment itself in deciding the matter, is central, and not the result of

---

<sup>50</sup> Georgoudi (2017) paraphrases Svenbro: “combustion ... does not mean that the victim is wholly or partly ‘destroyed’ or ‘annihilated.’ It is rather communicated, by means of combustion, to the supernatural recipients.

the choice in a pleasant or offputting meal. For, Prometheus offers the unrecognizable animal here as a sport for the mind, not as means of subsistence for stomachs (cf. *Dios noon* v. 537; and *tôn d'eleu hoppoterên se eni phresi thumos anôgei* v. 549).

Prior to the sacrifice, the 'animals' have also had no history. The speaker had omitted them in populating all the wooded hills and haunts of earth (v. 129ff), where nymphs abound; and several times describes the sea as barren (*atrugetos*, e.g. v. 242), even though it is filled up with further nymphs and deities. A litany of monsters and composite-creatures share in the divine, and are anomalous, not bearing on the presence of real animals, not born from them. The fates, who preside over ends for the living, do not regard animals (v. 220). There is no birth or creation of animals proper. The presence and utilization of animals, both for immortals and mortals, is groundlessly given, however. The very few positive mentions of animals in the *Theogony*, even which seem to precede the great ox of Prometheus, prove to refer to their status as servants and 'means to an end' in a 'post-promethean' society. Hesiod worked as a shepherd (v. 22); and praising Hekate's support for the human ambitions, he points to her aid for the riders, the fishermen, herdsmen, and goatherds (v. 439ff), etc. Nonetheless, there is no animal in the *Theogony* free from im/mortal prerogatives, or unappended to im/mortal (i.e. post-sacrifice) history.

Nor does Prometheus lead in a live ox and kill it. The status of death is subsumed in the action of "cutting, apportioning" which, it appears, he has finished without being noticed, before the whole narrative opens (*dassamenos* v. 536). The animal is not then physically present as referent, once, for the name which denotes its existence in nature (cf. *megan*

*boun*): but at first, it is no more an ox, not alive and not dead,<sup>51</sup> but a novelty reached by a private and prior decision, concealing the ox with the ox; an effacement and self-substitution. A purposed division and recombination of such unmistakable matter, the animal, brings us duplicitous portions, apparently and—in a latent and ‘ultimate reasoning’—actually opposite: therefore alike in their equivocality and/or apparent untruth. The surprise introduction of portions, which furthermore lies at the heart of the splitting-apart-and-reforming of human-god interface, here has absolved the *Theogony*’s speaker of telling the tale of the animal; much in the vein of humanity, when it appears in this storied surrounding of gods, it is already not to be found, its appearance is compromised. Naiden:

The god received not so much a substance as a sign. ... These signs were essential. Killing was not. It was instrumental.  
 ... [Burkert, Vernant, Detienne] overlooked how the victim, like any offering, was a sign for the god to answer, or, in acts of divination, to manipulate—a means to an end.<sup>52</sup>

*Semeia*, *signa* of all types, achieve the indirect exposure of an absent thing within us, by adverting our attention from themselves, as from the present of phenomena. The flaring of the fire and the trail of smoke; a series of irregular cross-hatchings, as in ink, e.g.—do not appear ‘as such’ within the mediating context of the ritual; and generally, not for a societally motivated action (which includes interpretation). But the sight (or ear, *mut. mut.*) makes use of signs by simultaneous unseeing, by a sight which also overlooks (viz. *lanthanein*). The simplest and the smallest operations of our memory (*mnêmosyne*)

---

<sup>51</sup> Another false distinction on which Vernant (1989) based much argument: that the portions represent the living and the dead ‘parts’ of the animal.

<sup>52</sup> Naiden (2015) p. 69; 81. Cf. Burkert (1987), p. 29: “In the history of mankind, ritual is far older than linguistic communication.”

dipose us toward engaging with *semeia*: in essential motion, reaching through what is there, at what isn't, any longer. Yet much more than this, the sign is a prescriptive—to remember: it coerces, it entrenches and commends itself for use. The very notion of the sign, and the potential to apply it<sup>53</sup>—as a thing perfected, atemporal—outlasts and outshines all passing things which serve to summon it, in time, to manifest it in a setting. The materials, phenomena, which *actually* comprise the sign's efficacy (the animal, the etching, or the sound) are inessential; they efface or else suppress themselves, allowing that the absent but intelligible signified 'appear' (though not appearing) in its stead.

Though we have long been aware that language constitutes a system of arbitrary signs relating to a referent (used here to mean both the thing and its conceptual image), it has been tacitly assumed that we recover the referent as it is. As though the signifier were only a screen that disappears as soon as it indicates the signified, language has been taken as a medium that takes us to the referent and recovers it *hic et nunc*.<sup>54</sup>

+++

They're never there when you need them. They're never there when you call them. They're never there when you need them. They're never there when you call them.<sup>55</sup>

In the linguistic dilemma which opens the poem, the shepherd can only enlighten the mind to the ultimate context of gods (viz. an infinite, self-enclosed narrative context) by dubious and unaccountable means. As a matter of fact, the validity of his assertions derives from belief in the poem, if from anywhere, since the whole truth of its many

---

<sup>53</sup> Thus what Derrida refers to as the transcendental signifier, in *On Grammatology*.

<sup>54</sup> Pucci (1977) p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> Talking Heads (1979) "Animals."



events, has been solely entrusted to figures born out of the poem's culmination: the Muses—who will not attest for themselves, i.e. outside the words of their vessel. Historically speaking, the ritual sacrifice too has been shown to rejuvenate and to maintain (in communal regard) an all-powerful context of gods, as remote from immediate presence, persuasively present through media and mediation, through formal procedures, 'analysis,' interpretation, translation and metaphor; all of which 'speak of' an understood reader—conspirator in the attachment of meaning. *Theogony*, taking itself from the midst of conventional sacrifice; moreover pictures primordial sacrifice as a displacing of presence (the ox), which divides, and unites in division, immortals and mortals. The animal—like the events that the Muses have knowledge of, and that the shepherd would conjure in words—despite having no literal roots in *Theogony's* purview, is granted existence in retrospect, now as a thing irretrievable in these *semeia* or signs, which inaugurate, and will perpetuate human-divine interaction. Indeed Prometheus' 'trick,' the instantaneous deployment of such privately premeditated 'images,' of tried and practiced *technê* (we compare the way the poet claims stupendous inspiration in an arduously drafted piece of text), denies the reader's intuition and has troubled the validity of all apparent form. The crucial meaning of the sacrificial victim, as a sign within the 'larger conversation,' the 'narration' of divine surrounds, depends upon a near-unconscious recourse to society (conspiracy, consensus in an ultimately reasonless establishment) with those who also entertain the sign; indeed depends upon that policy, that mediating past and its reflection in intentional longevity. The crucial valuation of the sacrificial animal must linger in the formal repetition, not at all in the materials with which the unapparent form is once more called to mind, in this or that instantiation. As

the victim is consumed within the altar-fire, serving as a message in the context of immortals, so the human subjectivity, which wrestles with appearance, externality, the world, as it appears, has been methodically committed to the mediating energy of language, to arrive at a political, and seemingly objectified reality.

+++

The unresolved authority of Hesiod's performance, whether it will be a human work of fiction or the history of gods as told by gods, incites the following consideration. Granted that F. Naiden has persuasively defined the motivation for all ritual activity as rooted in societal assurance in the gods (the deathless, mindful and remembering recipients of coded prayers, the makers of interpretable answers)—we may note that this concern is on the order of the judgment, i.e. consciousness (of media, of divination; signs) and should be complemented, not in fact contested, by suggestions and analyses of possible unconscious motivations. Walter Burkert's psychoanalytic take on the formalities and atmosphere of sacrificial rite (see *Homo Necans*, esp. I.2-7) deals with the effects of that experience upon the human actors and observers. Thus, the matter of the killing, of the animals at slaughter, not a message for the gods; yet he explicitly conceives of rite as action whose original intention has been swallowed up, forgotten, over time, so that the only explanation is, tradition is the cause of the tradition.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> See Burkert (1987) p. 25f

Burkert's general conception of 'the rite' is mostly Freud: who had already drawn 'conclusions'<sup>57</sup> from his work on individual, obsessional neurosis, which extended to the causes of the choreographed, group behavior making up religious rite. Neurotically, the ego feels offense at some such inborn, ineradicable urge, and it attempts to shut this out, or else to quell the urge with "substitutive satisfactions."<sup>58</sup> Freud regards suppression as a self-deceptive stage of the continual fixation on an impulse which the ego would forbid; in fact a complicated form of our continual submission to an inborn mental energy: he notes in fact that many "ceremonials" (formalities, symbolic gestures) come into existence as explicitly to enervate or disavow an impulse, but unconsciously to gratify it. Freud is then inspired to extrapolate:

The structure of a religion seems also to be founded on the suppression or renunciation of certain instinctual trends .... The suppression active in religion proves here also to be neither completely effective nor final.<sup>59</sup>

Again, whether ritual's ultimate urge and fulfilment are seated in unconscious regions, for which we cannot give a valid account; or if ritual orients onto the outermost frame of the gods as enframers, for which we cannot give a valid account: the effect is that conscious (sc. human) behavior is meant to be translated—out of the present—and is semiotic in nature. The fire destroys the original offering, but at the same time preserves it as an immaterial message. The work of the human practitioners, that which befalls the

---

<sup>57</sup> Freud (1978) *Character and Culture*, esp. p. 19ff

"obsessive acts are throughout and in all their details full of meaning ... they give expression both to persisting impressions of previous experiences and to thoughts about them which are strongly charged with affect. ... they are to be interpreted either historically or symbolically."

<sup>58</sup> Idem, p. 224.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, p. 24.

particular victim in any one instance of rite, has primarily formal and indirect value: immediate presence is hidden because overlooked (*lanthanein*), and perhaps automatically seen through to something remembered. The separate contentions of Naiden and Burkert—that sacrifice moved the immortals, or moved the unconscious—may not be so irreconcilable: percepts, in either, are rendered the shadows of things imperceptible; various, perishing things, which are met with the look of oblivion, power awareness of permanent signs and of archetypes. So, as in Burkert's most general terms:

a behavioral pattern ... has lost its primary function, but ... persists in a new function, that of communication, ... confirmed by the corresponding behavior in the partner, who understands the ritual communication because of its predetermined stereotypy.<sup>60</sup>

Ritualized killing, destroying by fire—perhaps the term 'offering' covers the gamut of actions sufficiently: choosing and mentally treating this thing as an offering—is a destruction inciting its own substitution. The ending of life and consuming of matter belie observation of permanent and immaterial signage.<sup>61</sup> The animal's death, and the treatment of actual bodies, is like the exhaust from the teleological engine of living inside a religious contextualization—as far as “the object serving as sign is exchangeable.”<sup>62</sup> Offerings predicate answers; the thought of community with the beyond has thus preordained sacrifice. Animals and other offerings have but an abstract and general weight, as does currency, or an electrical current: we know that *sacrificants* sought out the victims most 'pure in appearance,' colloquially (free of all prominent defects;

---

<sup>60</sup> Burkert (1987) p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> As Blake said way better.

<sup>62</sup> Burkert, (1987) p. 41.

homogenous coat, even monochromatic), in general; and that the victims were costumed (*kallierein*); that they were bound and constrained if indocile ('unceremonious'); and, as it happens, that basically no artefactual evidence speaks for the human participants' guilt or compassion<sup>63</sup>—as if they were not even there. The archaeological evidence *does* show that, even as far back as Paleolithic communities, people deliberately made reconstructions of sacrificed victims, employing the leftover skin, fur, the bones and the horns (or whathaveyou) to dress up a model of clay; or the animal matter might be put to use as a ritual instrument later; on other occasions, a monument might mark the place of a sacrifice.<sup>64</sup> All of this works to suggest that participants came to the ritual version of death or destruction as something alchemical, vanishing victims to regions of permanence, formal existence; away from the state of mortality, and its phenomenological counterpart: basic alterity, which is the law of the present.

---

<sup>63</sup> Note how my view here vindicates some Burkert and refutes some.

<sup>64</sup> See Burkert, p. 13ff, p. 39.

## IV. IN PERPETUAM

My son, a god more powerful than the one who made him, elder than the one who created him, sit on your throne, as the terror you inspire is great.<sup>65</sup>

You have nothing to fear my son. You are a latent appliance-fetishist, it appears to me.<sup>66</sup>

Before considering ‘Pandora,’ but, as well, by way of pondering the fire at the center of the Hesiodic myth, and its connection to that universe’s culminating deity and king forever, Zeus, I would prefer to forge a detour through an older, sacred text, which has a parallel concern for the establishment of humankind’s conditions of survival (*bios*; *biotos*), as punishment and ‘final’ reformation. A section of text from the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, which was prevalent during both Middle and New Kingdom Egypt, explained how the godking, all powerful Re, had once plotted the death of all humans, but, as this was being accomplished, the god changed his mind and averted their doom. He had summoned together the council of all of the gods, in his outrage for humankind’s vaguest offense, the employment of “words of conspiracy.” Re’s first decision to fully extinguish humanity takes on the form of a goddess (his “Eye”), who will follow the terrified humans, committed and made for attrition. But then, for the ruined, forsaken humanity, mercy arrives in the form of an afterthought: possible governance. Realizing they (humankind) could be managed if generally kept within bounds, Re contrives to outwit his own “Eye” (the personification of wrath) and release humankind from her jaws

---

<sup>65</sup> Nun addresses Re. *Book of the Heavenly Cow*.

<sup>66</sup> L. Ron Hoover addresses Joe. (Zappa, 1979) “A Token of My Extreme”

of oblivion. This he achieves by creating a counterfeit blood with an ocean of literal beer, which the goddess imbibes until no more aware of the humans.

The beer and fake-blood (a hendiadys) are reproduced, as the story explicitly says, on a festive occasion among the Egyptians, in memory of this so sombre salvation. The ferment embodies the turning-point and the persistence of human society after becoming subjected to total destruction: decay becomes novel vitality. Some of the earliest writing available to us for study (from Mesopotamia) is the recording of rations of beer which officials allotted for ‘undersigned’ laborers.<sup>67</sup> Harnessing natural yeast and directing their energy into a regular (i.e. predictable) cycle of change is undoubtedly primal technology, mirroring the work of politicization, inseparable from it. And just as the bloodthirst of Re was embodied, and worked independently of him thereafter; his sudden reversal of purpose is also embodied, created by linguistic doubling, taking the somewhat surprising appearance of sourdough starter.

Re said “I will govern (*sekhem*) them as king by diminishing them.” And so Sekhmet, the breadpaste of night, came into being to wade across their blood from Herakleopolis.

Indeed the sourdough technique of feeding milled red emmer berries and fresh water to an old decaying “breadpaste” of the same, which then digested these ingredients (by naturally occurring lactobacilli and yeast; or by divine decree, depending on the era), and incorporated them into itself—was first employed by the Egyptians, whose economy and governmental structures were in no small part constructed to accommodate the bread

---

<sup>67</sup> (Macgregor, 2011)

production.<sup>68</sup> Working overnight on said digestion, by the morning the resulting paste was noticeably living and supplied the vital energy (the leavening) for countless loaves of bread; but there was always some proportion left decaying, so the process was perpetual and virtually unlimited.

The starter is homogenous, suspended in a state of convalescence and decay; the semi-liquid mixture serves in fact to foster an invisible collective force which may be fed forever. This is very much in keeping with the fire of Prometheus: both vital *and* consumptive force, continually turning new materia which touch it to its own component energies. Herakleitos:

κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων  
ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ αἰείζων, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα  
καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα.

This one and single order in which all partake—no god, no human being made it. It was, is, and will be everlasting fire: growing large and dwindling in all proportion.<sup>69</sup>

Fire is the second gift Prometheus secures for humankind, though not in league with them—more accurately using them as foil, in malevolence to Zeus. The use, the harnessing of fire as an instrument, enables repetition for the sacrificial model (cf. *Theog.* v. 567). Had the king of gods succeeded in depriving humankind of this most crucial force of mediation, sacrifice would just have been an instance, not a custom and technology of offering up messages to gods for their responses. Yet the sacrificial fire (as

---

<sup>68</sup> Jacob, H.E. (2014)

<sup>69</sup> fr. 30



per Naiden) seems to finalize the efforts of abstraction which pervade the whole of ritual activity. Atop an altar, fire served to mediate between the present spectacle of bodies that must perish and the (*theorized* existence of the) deathless and invisible intelligences, capable of gleanings formal ‘substance’ from destruction.

+++

In his outrage at deception in the sacrificial portions, Zeus immediately whisks away all fire from the purview and the consciousness of human beings. Hidden, it is nonetheless immediately given back, by alternate concealment (cf. ‘signifieds’ arrived at via signs). As a phenomenon—self-overwhelming, -superceding, fed upon and feeding on itself—the fire calls us toward acknowledgement of universal formlessness, a general alterity of energy as paradox of order, constitution (as per Husserl, for instance, by whose standards really nothing rests in formal definition). But the fire given humans is however emblematically controlled in its expression to a great degree (confined within a hollowed bulb of fennel), and intended for deployment on command upon an altar, therefore centering the *temenos* prefiguring Euclidean geometry. To say that someone owns it in advance and as an object, which would have to make it finite, and yet also reproducible as surely as the name by which we speak of it—this basically presents us with the insolence of language in its *différance*: our fire has beginning, middle, end. And that extent, or form, now indicates the interface of gods and human beings.

In another scene, the battle between Typhôeus and Zeus, an all-encompassing ‘explosion’ of this elemental force obscures the equal and yet opposite contenders, discombobulates the features of the world;<sup>70</sup> and in that formless surge of flame, the future order of existence waits and wavers (v. 836f). Typhôeus, indeed the final obstacle to Zeus’ plan for order in the universe—a child of the Earth in love with Tartaros, the landscape of mortality—the monstrum, is a manifold of moving pieces thoroughly aflame. His limbs are tireless (*akamatos*, an ‘epithet’ of fire); from his ever shifting trunk a hundred snake-heads leer with eyes of fire.

φωναὶ δ' ἐν πάσῃσιν ἔσαν δεινῆς κεφαλῇσι,  
 παντοίην ὅπ' ἰεῖσαι ἀθέσφατον· ἄλλοτε μὲν γὰρ  
 φθέγγονθ' ὥς τε θεοῖσι συνιέμεν, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε  
 ταύρου ἐριβρύχεω μένος ἀσχέτου ὄσσαν ἀγούρου,  
 ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε λέοντος ἀναιδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντος,  
 ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ σκυλάκεσσιν ἐοικότα

In the horrifying heads there were all sorts of voices,  
 talking—more than any god can speak of—sometimes  
 voices such as gods may comprehend, but then  
 at other times, the noises of a chiseled bull, deep-lowing, or  
 again a lion, free of shame at heart,  
 or like a pack of dogs ...<sup>71</sup>

The fusion of identities, fluidity of meaning which this powerful vociferation brings to mind; the unpredictability in Typhôeus, who must be called innumerable, more than all else challenges the purpose and intention of the mighty Zeus, who famously “distributes what belongs to each immortal, rank and title.”<sup>72</sup> A political unification (sc. under one system or ideological body) defeats and replaces the daunting display of sensorial

<sup>70</sup> cf. the ending of Aesch. *Prometheus Bound*.

<sup>71</sup> *Theog.* v. 829-34.

<sup>72</sup> cf. foretold v. 112; achieved, just after Typhôeus defeated, v. 885.

oneness in Typhôeus (‘actual’ body, chaotic). The power of fire, innate to the subject of Typhôeus “flickering under the brows, in the glance” (v. 827), is in contrast achieved through a well-tailored instrumentation, a weapon external to Zeus (*heileto d’hoplâ* v. 853). The Kyklôpes, smithies enclosed in the Earth for their service, when Zeus becomes king; who permit him this access to fire, indeed are the names of these ‘instruments:’ Thunder, Bolt, Flash (“and they fashioned and gave him the lightning” *t’ edosan teuxan te keraunon* v. 140-1). Surely, this iconic arsenal makes all the difference, determines a form for the end to this burgeoning deadlock approaching on formlessness: out of the seething and pancosmic disarray, Typhôeus falls in a heap, and the reign of Olympian Zeus has begun. From the heat of the bolt which decides the ‘dispute,’ and the last dying breath of the monster, in simile, all of the earth is transmuted as minerals are by the *technê* of smelting.

πολλὴ δὲ πελώρη καίετο γαῖα  
 αὐτμῇ θεσπεσίῃ, καὶ ἐτήκετο κασσίτερος ὥς  
 τέχνη ὑπ’ αἰζηῶν ἐν ἐντρήτοις χοάνοισι  
 θαλφθεῖς, ἢ σίδηρος, ὃ περ κρατερώτατός ἐστιν,  
 οὖρεος ἐν βήσσησι δαμαζόμενος πυρὶ κηλέῃ  
 τήκεται ἐν χθονὶ δίῃ ὑφ’ Ἡφαίστου παλάμησιν·  
 ὥς ἄρα τήκετο γαῖα σέλαι πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο.

Greatly burned capacious Earth  
 in gusts of godly breath: and she was melted  
 as a piece of tin, when heated up excessively by craft and  
 in a well-fit mould; or iron, from the mountain woods,  
 the strongest of the metals—as the fingers of Hêphaistos  
 with their burning fire melt it to submission, in the godly earth—  
 so in the surge of fire’s light the earth was melted.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> v. 861-7.

Non-differentiable, *gaia* as earth in the physical or the empirical sense, and as one of the narrative's oldest (yea ageless) most primary actors, the great divine mother, submits to the *indirect force* of this weapon, which rescues its master from being dissolved in the blaze of his equally abled opponent. The fire that conquers—the lightning that enters and settles all things, as Herakleitos elsewhere pronounces—unlike that of Typhôeus, is artefactual. Whereas the heralding firestorm, which is emitted from Typhôeus, blurs all divisions and rattles 'the fundament' (v. 845-53), Zeus' attack, with distinguishing weaponry, works like a process of technical (*qua* metallurgical) purification, a tool for abstracting from mixtures of elements. Earth, as the ground and the basis of speaker and listener—actor, observer; thus, all—has been here reimagined with reference to formalized acts of repeated intention: the Earth is now *like* the production of artisan gods in the "deified soil" (a more exact trans. of above *chthoni diêi*). The physical (natural) 'earth of the simile' houses the gods and the abstracting, rendering processes (i.e. the forge) to which primary Earth, or the 'earth of the episode,' loses its image: the figure eclipses the model. The dawn and exemplar, within the *Theogony*, of its essential genetic progression, of natural birth (cf. geminal wordplay upon the inception of physica: *Gaia* ... *egeinato* v. 126) Earth becomes unrecognizable, due to the work of her technical counterpart: forgery, mass-reproduction—of, by the way, always inanimate objects (and instruments). In the distorting or else reformation of Earth via technical melting, we thus hear a muffling echo of natural birth (compare *gaia* ... *etêketo* above, with the previous *gaia* ... *etikten*, e.g., at v. 45). The difference in these 'reproductions,' is patent, indeed as the difference between the 'two' fires, especially granted the somewhat particular scene of the simile: *mixis* like sex creates novelty out of existing identities (sc. constitutions);

the forger, however, can filter and break the particular down to homogenous substance for filling a mould, for repeating existing identities. Herein, the flood of alterity, ‘mortal’ phenomena, seems to have been redirected, that ‘newfound’ materials, rather than mingle to make new materials, serve to perpetuate (propagate copies of ) image-identities, nominal forms. And so Zeus in complete iconography scourges, transfigures the face of the earth, in the act of extinguishing unbounded, fluid ‘identity’ (Typhôeus, Earth’s most formidable child, containing a good enough likeness to so many animals) that he completely establish the total extent of his cosmic bureaucracy—titles and offices fixed for the deathless celestials (cf. v. 881-5, see especially: “violently forced to be judged by these titles” *timaôn krinanto biêphi*).

+++

The ultimate (or else, at least impressively conclusive seeming) *founding* of the reign of Zeus ‘most-powerful’—concisely represented in that action, his determining the merits of the rest of the immortals (*diedassato* v. 885: the verb applied as well to the more physical ‘arrangements’ of Prometheus, v.536)—this critical foundation has been neatly couched itself between the quashing of an outside threat (Typhôeus) and an inner or domestic ‘threat,’ which we will cover here. Established king, the god’s immediate, first exploit is in ‘marriage,’ yet the feat is no less monumental, and no less conducive to his permanence ‘in office;’ no less fatal. “Firstly, Zeus took Thought to be his bedmate” (*Mêtis* v. 886). Zeus consumes his ‘wife’ (imagine: whole, intact?) when she would be delivered of their first conceived, who comes into the light instead (i.e. the light of

endless life) from Zeus' head: his final child Athênê (who follows after many children *not* produced asexually).<sup>74</sup> Though Thought “knew more than gods and human beings,” (*pleista ... eiduian*) Zeus easily misleads her with “some bullshit” (*dolôi ... aimuliosi logoisin* v. 888f); at the same time under-handedly “emplacing” her within an inner cavity (the *nêdus*, sometimes womb or stomach; generally, any hollow interstice), “that she would have a part in his deliberations, good and evil” (*sumphrassaito* v.900).

In so doing, Zeus has brought an end to the predominant dynamic of the speaker's cosmic revelation. What might very well be called the issue of divine succession—i.e. that a self-aggrandized god is greatly threatened by their scion and indeed ‘must’ turn against them—as a plot-device, is certainly “the backbone of the *Theogony*.”<sup>75</sup> The graphic, atavistic pattern carries on from Ouranos and Kronos down to Zeus: the basic narrative: the father-god desires to annihilate the products of his *mixis*, fearing filial ingratitude and ruin from his children; he is ultimately met with great resistance by (the) Earth, who lets the child triumph. Certainly, the paradigms of sexual, and then cross-generational abuse within these tales are intertwined and cause each other: in his grapplings with fear, if not outside these dramas, each paternal god will overlook and further violently suppress (assault) the mother's will and try to stop the body's (nature's) processes. By his very constitution seemingly unable to desist from these proliferating “games,” perhaps, he tries to cancel birth, to stave off progeny from taking his prestigious and authoritative title. This indeed entails extreme abuses; as we know, in this regard the godking Zeus is no exception. Zeus instead distinguishes himself because he actuates a permanent

---

<sup>74</sup> v. 888, Mêtis intends to give birth, and v.924 *autos d' ek kephalês*, he gives birth from his head; in the verses between, Zeus has taken on four other “bedmates” and had many children.

<sup>75</sup> West, p. 31.

dominion where his predecessors, even though immortal, are defeated in the blindness of their egoism.

(Fig.) *The three generations of Heavenly dynasts and partners:*

Ouranos—Earth

Kronos—Rheia

Zeus—Metis, et al.

Though the figure above employs no repeat terms, in denoting the sexual partners; importantly, Earth does not only bear Kronos, but all by herself creates Ouranos, and as a surrogate mother bears Zeus (on the strength of the figurative language).<sup>76</sup> She also presides over ends for these dynasts: creating the adamant sawteeth for Kronos to unman and overwhelm Ouranos; joining with Rheia to overthrow Kronos by dressing a rock as a baby. Aside from revealing to Zeus (as she once informed Kronos) that, in time, an unwieldy child is meant to succeed him, become his undoing, the Earth both creates and unleashes the near-fatal threats to his ‘final’ dominion (Typhôeus, the Titans before him). Where all the paternal, the so-called Ouranian (“Heavenly”) gods are compelled (and repulsed) by the fear of succession, and move with a truly intensive concern for themselves against everything, as to ensure their longevity (granted their actions provoke the successor’s resentment)—the Earth over time will confound the conception that she

---

<sup>76</sup> Earth hides him in Krete, in a cave, “in the hidden depth of holy earth” (*zatheês hupo keuthesi gaiês*, v. 483) and releases him later. We have to compare the explicitly sexual, earlier telling of Ouranos, Heaven, who buries the children of Earth in “Earth’s hiding place [*keuthmôni*], not then releasing them into the light” (*kai es phaos ouk anieske* v. 156-8), where they are at a vantage moreover to castrate the god when he enters again.

is, in general, serving particular ends (viz. protecting herself or devoted, indentured to somebody). From the beginning, instead, she has fostered and functions to power alterity, working to bring about terms that are yet to exist (the unborn and expressly ‘unbidden’), and not then indebted to manifest terms, to protecting existing personas. She instigates lapse of established identities, all of which she had permitted existence, in service of ‘infinite’ (unconstrained) *mixis* and proliferation. Indeed, her primordial action, which grounds and begins the ‘Succession Myth,’ emblemizes her virtually constant resistance to manifest forms—in the drafting, producing of which, she is nonetheless always entangled.

Γαῖα δέ τοι πρῶτον μὲν ἐγείνατο ἴσον ἑωυτῇ  
 Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόενθ', ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα καλύπτοι,  
 ὅφρ' εἴη μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ, ....

Earth of course first produced Heaven, the starry,  
 a double, to shroud her entirely, that she become  
 the unshifting foundation of gods, of the blessed.<sup>77</sup>

Evolved out of nothing,<sup>78</sup> spontaneous, autogenetic, the first comprehensible entity in the *Theogony*’s deified cosmos—as over against the collection of void-like personas (viz. Chaos, Night, Darkness, Day, Atmosphere) mentioned before this quotation; who barely have narrative presence—the primary figure of Earth thus primarily cancels, replaces herself with an ‘equal’ or ‘double’ of opaque and yet incorporeal ‘being.’ This violently lingering shroud over Earth, a most consummate work of suppression (*kalupsis*) concurrently stands as the basis (the *edos* or grounds) for divinity, font of the honestly

---

<sup>77</sup> *Theog.* v. 126-8

<sup>78</sup> Since Gaia’s genetic connection to Chaos is hardly in evidence.



numberless, permanent figures. Even though, typically, over the course of *Theogony*, Earth and the tripartite chain of male presences equally act by concealment of persons (identities)—always, the father intends to negate *in perpetuum*, keeping his name and his power preserved, while the mother preserves by concealing for only a time, and moreover it seems she has brought herself into existence to offer herself, as a victim is offered, to violent abuse, to a cycle of violent abuses, continual vanishment—‘therefore’ the motionless home of the pantheon. Earth’s own self-suppression, via doubling, invents and pulls the strings of patriarchal, oppositional, self-interested identities. The males are hence the passing terms in earth’s unchanging, purposed mission (see last excerpt, notably the grammar of intention: *hina min ... kaluptoi, ophr’ eiê ... aiei*). Perhaps Earth’s ‘program’ as a whole is thus an anti-stance. Without effecting any outward sign of her unrest and transformations of intent and disposition, she undoes the ‘fully-formed,’ the ‘adult’ figures she herself created, rescued, brought to power.

As the middle term of three in the *Theogony*’s dynastic series, Kronos both performs as the suppressed and hateful child and, in turn, as the suppressor full of dread in his maturity (while Ouranos contrarily is born without adversity or precedent, and Zeus, at last, succeeds in breaking free of the ‘foretold’ succession). Kronos leaves the womb prepared, debriefed in fact that he will best his father, yet he imitates the wrongs which in his father so disgusted him, and so invites the selfsame ruin, miming Heaven’s character (cf., of Zeus as well, *ho d’ ouranôi embasileuei*, “he was the king in [place of] Heaven”). Although Earth at first confided in the unborn Kronos—rescued and was mutually rescued by the child from the former king’s debauches—she unflinchingly elects to take

the burdens of his later ‘wife’ upon herself, and undermine Kronos’ swollen tenure. For the pregnant Rheia plead her case in secret to the primal mother Earth, away from Kronos, that she find some liberation for her children:

καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατέπινε μέγας Κρόνος, ὥς τις ἕκαστος  
νηδύος ἐξ ἱερῆς μητρὸς πρὸς γούναθ' ἵκοιτο,  
τὰ φρονέων, ἵνα μὴ τις ...  
ἄλλος ... ἔχοι βασιληίδα τιμήν.

Great Kronos swallowed them, as each one made its way  
toward mother’s knees, from deep within  
her sacred body—He was thinking no one else ...  
would lay their hand upon the title of the king.<sup>79</sup>

The notion that *Rheia* derives from intransitive *rheein*, a verb meaning “flow,” as of water, is already common in records of Classical thought; it inspired in part a Socratic discussion on formlessness as the reality of our experience.<sup>80</sup> Certainly normal morphology renders the god Rheia’s name as the nominal form of this motion, of lapsing from form, an idea of all flux without thereby involving particular matter (a subject or object, beginning or end to the process of flowing; cf. the *archê* of *apeirôn*). So luridly, Kronos “drinks down” (*katēpine*) the manifestations of life from this flow as they newly occur; he engulfs and enshrouds all ‘becoming’ to serve his elected identity. Earth on the contrary willfully risks her position and puts out of mind her connection to Kronos to undam ‘the flowing of Rheia,’ directing its course from voracious and fully-formed figures which only assimilate unto themselves and cannot allow genuine otherness, furthermore free of deterioration and death.

---

<sup>79</sup> *Theog.* v. 459-62.

<sup>80</sup> As opposed to the lasting distinctions comprising our language. See Plato, *Cratylus* 402b; 437, 440b-c. In addition, see the fragments of Chrysippus; on the gods as merely aspects of a pandeistic cosmos; and that Rhea was the flow of water.

Earth, for both Kronos and Zeus, will predict the succession;<sup>81</sup> and really, the father's offenses, the crimes and unseemly decisions (cf. *aeikea meisato* v. 166) both come from and answer this rather formidable thought of the foretold successor. Where Earth is thus always proponent and herald of transience, unbound creation and natural change (or succession), beginning, in fact, with complete self-effacement (v.127), the series of fathers are equally characterized by incorrigibility: fear—that collapse of identity (their own effacement, in fact) is a truly determined necessity—fuels the apparently futile work of suppressing (subsuming, digesting) externals and novel occurrences. Earth both creates and empowers the cyclical lapsing of 'opposite terms' while remaining a self-effaced substrate, an anti-position (so, via Seligman, cf. the anaximandrian *apeirôn* actively functions as absent and unrepresentable cause of the balance of opposite forces—poeticized as *adikia*, injustices).<sup>82</sup> Earth having forfeited selfhood becomes like a backdrop for merely provisional figures,<sup>83</sup> obsessed with achieving their own definitions in negative. So, the fond hope of achieving eternal identity (proto-political office) persistently falters; is found to be caught on its genealogical root in a prior, eternal indefinite. Verily, Earth is not born—though the speaker has set out to show “the beginning” in clarity, they have omitted a verb which would designate birth or essential existence, and left us an obstinate noun-phrase—and further, despite that the speaker

---

<sup>81</sup> As Ouranos mingles directly with Earth, his awareness of burgeoning threats of succession is rather direct (sc. phenomenal, sense and emotion), whereas the later gods “learn” of the threat indirectly (sc. signs: *phrazein*, *peuthesthai*. Cf. v.463ff and v. 891-3).

<sup>82</sup> Seligman, (1975).

<sup>83</sup> See also v. 117, *pantôn edos asphales aiei athanatôn*. Though, of course, all of the patriarchs cannot have literal, physical endpoints in death; they importantly take on the risk on a nominal level, when entering proto-political discourse, as far as they center themselves on the issue of title or status.

presents her just after the primal existence of Chaos, (v.116) they deem her a constant and, hence, ahistorical (*aiei*).

+++

We are now in position to gauge the extent of the paradigm shift that is Zeus' unlimited reign. As above has been mentioned, the themes which the dynasts before him grotesquely established are certainly found in his story—the violent obtaining of power, the immanent thought of succession, the violent suppression of sexual partner in view of escaping that threat—and yet Zeus is successful. The god, who when firstly created could not be discerned from a very large stone with the formal cachets of an infant (indeed it is hard to imagine that tactic succeeding; see *sparganisasa ... lithon* v.485)—the god Zeus, for whom fire was first of all rendered a graspable instrument, stands through the onslaught of all revolutions the Earth can unleash (both the Titans and Typhôeus), and will defy and disprove the Earth's 'prophecy,' ending the chain of successions. Earth, out of character, lends her support to the codification of Zeus' dominion, and openly argues for Zeus to be granted an infinite tenure (v. 883ff), decisively pressing for this by rhetorical prowess (see *phradmosynêisin*). Within the electrified concourse of gods, she engenders an unprecedented political rally for permanence (*ôtrunon basileuemen ... euruopa Zên*).

Certainly, Zeus' 'election' depends on the battle with Typhôeus, Earth's last denoted production, who therefore embodies the final resistance to lasting (political) order (that

order itself a resistance to natural processes, and to the truthful awareness of Earth, of the need for succession, alterity). Rapidly, just in the wake of Typhôeus' death, inexplicably, history veers from the course of Earth's 'prophecies.' Though she foresees it, in fact a superior, unwieldy child does not threaten Zeus; she has prophesied true, and yet turned on her truthful awareness in service to Zeus, the formidable patriarch. Certainly, in the assembly of gods that elects Zeus 'forever', the Earth does not act as a prophet, but demagogue, speaking with purpose to fashion the future of Zeus' unlimited and incontestable kingdom. Here likewise, although she recalls the pre-destined successor to Zeus, she will filter her knowledge by cunning (again *phradmosynêisi* v. 891) clearly to help and to extricate Zeus from the web of necessity, as from the current of present alterity—bidding him enter his infamous, permanent redoubt. But radically, Earth's abrupt switch to a stance which the *status quo* motivates and which intends preservation of all definition (sc. *timai*); as also the switch from unserving predictions (of truth, what *will* happen) to hopeful prescriptions (which work by a different authority)... this dispositional change has a somewhat disturbing material precedent: Earth as a whole has been tempered by fire. And not only fire, but indirect casts from the smoldering lightning, from fire as instrument, object and property, and in its ultimate routing of fire as wild, unbound and at each instant not to be recognized.<sup>84</sup> Earth, in the indirect light of this finishing *agon* of fire (n.b. "*selai puros*:" the heat of the flame not at issue) has been redefined, i.e. ruined, reshaped in its contours; collapsed and refashioned (*têketai*).<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Whereas the lightning is perfectly iconographical, Typhôeus' hundred flaming snakeheads are a screen of anonymity when weighed against the limitless creations of the voice that they achieve.

<sup>85</sup> For this and what follows, refer to the excerpt on v. 861-7.

The melting of Earth can be seen, rather thought indirectly through simile only. The Earth that we share with the Greeks as with all (and which Husserl calls by *der Lebenswelt*: lifeworld) was, in their cosmology, generally nearer the whole of ‘the picture,’ a singular planet encircled by heaven, the vault. In the actual simile, earth as approximate whole (*pelôrê*) is ‘replaced by’ (conceived via reference to) some individual, miniscule piece taken out of the Earth (*kassiteros; sidêros ... oureos*) to fit the intended designs of a god or a craftsman, and certainly both (*technêi hyp’ aizêôn ... thalptheis. ... en chthoni diêi hyph’ Hêphaistou*—n.b. the heat is thus explicit on the level of the figural reflection, not the actual event). The metals, melting overseen in fact, by instrument and purpose (*choanoisi ... palamêisin*), will solidify anew, perhaps homogenized and ‘purified,’ perhaps within a mold, so that a well-familiar form is once more manifest. The dying breath of Typhôeus, thus fatally electrified, divinely-fallen, all throughout the earth (*autmêi thespesiêi*), as fire in the service of the mind’s designs (*dia boulas*, as often Zeus’) casts the very fundament of Earth (again the *edos* of immortal context) merely as the incidental, indirect expression of the grandeur of the lightning bolt. So Earth no more resists the interminable dominion of the king of gods and humans, but she argues in his interests, she becomes another instrument; the *topos* of the forge, the fire’s prison (and the prison of the Titan gods), the sanctum of its endless labor, no more biological.

+++

ἀσκήσας παλάμῃσι, χαριζόμενος Διὶ πατρί.  
τῇ δ' ἐνὶ δαίδαλα πολλὰ τετεύχατο, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι,  
κνώδαλ' ὅσ' ἤπειρος δεινὰ τρέφει ἠδὲ θάλασσα·  
τῶν ὃ γε πόλλ' ἐνέθηκε, χάρις δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄητο,  
θαυμάσια, ζῳοῖσιν ἐοικότα φωνήεσσιν.  
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τεῦξε καλὸν κακὸν ἀντ' ἀγαθοῖο,

ἐξάγαγ' ἔνθα περ ἄλλοι ἔσαν θεοὶ ἢ δ' ἄνθρωποι.

Hephaistos, as a favor for the Father Zeus, had given it a form and dressed it over with intelligent designs to catch the eye: terrific creatures, all that boundless space and ocean nurture, he imprinted. Beauty breathed on all of them: near-living, almost chattering—a wonder.... And so Zeus had finished dressing up the pain, to balance gain. He lead her out to all the other gods, and humankind.<sup>86</sup>

Humans within the *Theogony* only pertain to the epoch of Zeus' dominion, the 'final' and lasting, the weaponized.<sup>87</sup> Humans pertain to an Earth irrevocably changed by the instrument, lightning, which canceled Typhôeus' fluid infinity of presentations; an Earth without actual animals (*zôia*, a form of the verbal root *zô*, "I am living"), though humans engage indirectly with animals as the illegible something beneath the duplicitous signs (of the sacrifice). Now, and in full culmination, the humans are only permitted a future existence, an ongoing cultural presence and character (e.g. the form of the sacrifice: just at this moment, the whole of their culture) as channeled through products of artistry: caught in forever-uncomfortable bonds, to the magical sculpture of woman, created by Zeus in his terrible wrath. As we now have summarily followed the god through those trials by which he defined himself permanent master and universe-architect—we can begin to perceive how this gift, of the rootstock of women to mortal humanity, really commemorates, propagates Zeus' exceptional difference; and translates the godking's 'achievement' to mortal horizons. The god who had saved his political status by bearing the child of Thought from the crown of his head; and whose powerful tools had

---

<sup>86</sup> Of the proto-woman's headdress, *Theog.* v. 580-6.

<sup>87</sup> The sacrifice belongs to a collection of digressive narratives, as Hamilton terms them, which interrupt the forward flowing motion of the poem. The sacrifice is probably the latest moment chronologically, within the poem, besides the introduction scene wherein the shepherd meets the muses.

refashioned the Earth, the great mother—now Zeus will create and produce (from his premeditations, decisions; *dia boulas*) all the conditions for humans, that die, to have kids and perpetuate culture (Pandora, unnamed); he has fashioned (commissioned Hêphaistos to fashion) from earth a new substitute mother—the origin point of humanity’s presence as yet undetermined. The earthen rendition (*gaiês gar sumplasse* v. 571), the ‘counterfeit’ truly becomes overwhelming (i.e. as the truth) with Hephaistos’ final addition: a total depiction of earth in its bounty of life. Indeed not only humans but gods are entirely spellbound, to see its incredible depth of refinement (v. 588).

The substantive *daidala* speaks to the artwork’s success in confounding the usually overt divide between vital production and technical mimicry (Daedalus being renowned above all for machines which afford their possessor a fleetingly functional animal-being: the bull for Pasiphaê, wings for himself and his son). The conclusive addition, the headdress, though briefly described, will belong to that class of ekphrastic description in Epics: the trope of imaginatively surpassing the limits of physical space; and of therefore existing more seriously in the mind than as actual artefact. Whereas the shield of Achilles, e.g., or Penelope’s shroud, or the mural of Troy in the palace of Dido, etc., exit the realm of the actually possible, by their sheer number of details, of narrative scenes and of figures supposedly captured and copied—the headdress of Zeus’ creation effects the same baffling scope by abstraction, a dearth of expression. The basically single-line ekphrasis (*knôdal’ hos’ êpeiros...*; note the impressive elision) ‘produces’ the Earth surreptitiously, not naming any material presence but, rather unusually, speaking instead of “the



boundless [expanse], and the ocean;” it conjures “the animals”<sup>88</sup> only in all generality, not by examples: the object of technê contains “just as many” as Earth and the sea ‘in reality.’ West has remarked<sup>89</sup> that the diction and formal conception here seems reminiscent of Ancient Greek deathmasks—a wrought work of metal which mimicked the face of the corpse that it covered. The body this earthen-made, substitute-mother enshrouds and memorializes, that body is (Earth as) unbounded and infinite. Now that Typhôeus’ myriad animal utterances have been quieted, vanished along with the incomprehensible, fiery figure; the godking’s technologization of fire, that remade the Earth in its indirect force, will replace the indefinite, endless expressions of earth, with an icon, the somehow objectified representations of same: with the likeness of life and of utterance (zôisin eoikota phônêssin).

The godking’s creation completes the occlusion of mortal humanity’s nature and origin: this is not woman but likeness thereof (see v. 572); and a copy without an original. Yet, proto-woman derives not from absent and unwritten sources (while prior humanity has no beginning, inside of the poem) ‘she’ depends on and follows exactly the logical close of *Theogony*’s cosmic arrangement: the final two children in Zeus’ (therefore in the Earth’s) genealogy, i.e. Hephaistos, Athênê, the both of them born without sexual union (sc. *mixis*), integrally shape the appearance of Zeus’ designs. In the aftermath, then, of the sacrifice—groundless humanity, gaining technologized fire, has thus been coerced to effect derivation from inside *Theogony*’s god-laden universe; and at the same time from fiction, objectively speaking, i.e. the perspective of narrator, sharing the secret of Zeus.

---

<sup>88</sup> On the general term “animal(s),” see Derrida, trans. Mallet (2008).

<sup>89</sup> In his commentary on v. 582.

Humankind's new way of living (and of reproduction) thus follows the end of what Hamilton calls the most general theme of *Theogony's* forward progression:<sup>90</sup> the fade and transition of genealogical into political structure. To temper the lousy amount of archaic misogyny, we should consider that Zeus' creation with great metonymy heralds and harbors the whole of 'new (i.e. political) human existence;' that far from specifically burdening men with 'the wife' (though the speaker does dwell overlong on this aspect) the 'vengeance' of Zeus becomes equally manifest here for the man who will not take a wife (*gamon pheugôn...* v. 603-7), as for him with a wife he calls precious, to which "he is joined in his spirit" (*kednên ...* v. 608-10); or else in the wrongs of one's children, or distant relations (*chêrôstai ; atartêroio genethlês* v. 610-12). The family unit, its constant extension and maintenance, seems the more general 'curse' for which Zeus' production becomes both the scapegoat and spectacle. When the unmarried man suffers because his inheritance (family name and dominion and property; cf. the immortal *timai*) must go unpreserved and disperse beyond all recognition, since "nobody tends to his agedness" (*chêtai gêrokomoio*), then it would seem the contempt which the poet expresses derives from the need to establish a lasting societal presence, a legacy—not from the nature or presence of woman implicitly.

Zeus' donation responds to the human possession of fire as equal and counterpoint (*anti puros*, v. 570). As before, in the custom of sacrifice, fire will transmute the animal bodies 'by putting them out of all sight' (cf. *apokruptein*, as used in the graphic suppressions of children) encrypting ethereal messages there, where materials vanished; the mortal

---

<sup>90</sup> Hamilton (1989), p. 41.

society, now reproductively *mixis*-endowed by a feat of technology, powers across and throughout generations in constant decline the unbroken existence of customs, of signs we conceive of as pure repetitions, forever applicable—all institutions of nomen and numen; tradition, in general. Hence, like the sourdough starter of Re (i.e. Sekhmet), *Theogony*'s semi-moist mixture of Earth will promote an invisible presence, a commonwealth-atmosphere, having no absolute limits to vital production, to self-generation (the uniform starter persists, as the various loaves it engenders are brought to perfection and perish, again and again). The invention of Zeus indeed parallels Re's in a curious sense: that the tactics of both of the godkings are purposed to 'undo' their earlier choices. "The dual-king Re" devised the very threat that the creation and contrivance of the ferments both symbolically and literally contravert. And Zeus had first permitted that Prometheus offend him with the sacrifice, thus welcoming the anger which 'requires' that he hide the fire, forge the proto-woman. The regenerative ferments (and the fire) and the reproductive artefact of technê—each presented as a keystone to societal persistence (for humanity)—are equally self-conscious counter-actions: overwhelmings of the standpoint of the self and antithetical reflections.

+++

The decisive point is that man may submit to laws curbing his individual intelligence and adaptability for the sake of societal predictability.<sup>91</sup>

Again, where Naiden more exclusively defined 'the ends' of sacrificial ritual, in terms of an exchange between two 'cultures' kept distinct, the gods and humans; Burkert

---

<sup>91</sup> Burkert (1987), p.19

absolutely looked upon the sacrifice as symptom of unfathomable trauma (strictly human) which attended the constructions of ‘political’ communities, beginning with the *socius* united by the hunt. The use of tools, of *technê*, *hopla*—changed the prehistoric humans to a predatory species ‘overnight;’ and with the power to subdue and kill a wide array of animals, came also greater threats of intra-human acts of violence and fatality.<sup>92</sup> Thus, partly, in the manner of a Freudian suppression, hunting channeled the aggression of the panic-stricken, earliest communities of humans, from their semblables and onto ‘something else.’ Successful groups began to settle more significantly, to ‘possess their land;’ and the division was increasingly pronounced between interior society, predominantly overseen by women, and the less-refined society of men who did the hunting and the foreign expeditions. While the former saw in general an increase in stability, of structures, of routines and institutions, the exteriorly oriented, masculine community continued to pursue new foreign bodies with destructive force. The custom of the sacrifice for Burkert was essential in emotionally coping with this most integral schism: and the whole of the prolific, formal affectations; ceremonies, laws and regulations, which arose around the sacrifice, would situate the unsurpassed necessity to kill, within a context (the domestic) which was ever more removed from the arena of the wild, the undisciplined and volatile. Custom ‘hid’ the killing in a grand display of forms which had been severed from alterity—the universal death of the phenomena in private (viz. subjective, incommunicable) ‘knowledge’ or experience.

---

<sup>92</sup> See also Burkert, *Savage Energies*, p.14 “Thus from the very start, self-destruction was a threat to the human race”

If driven quite unconsciously by fear of self-annihilation (cf. the extremely Greek obsession, in the formative mythologies, with cannibals and cycles of familial murder: Kronos; Atreus, e.g.), as also by the fear of death as truly universal (Will I suffer, as the animals before me? If the mode of life is death?)—it seems harmonious that, consciously, within their own reflections and overt expressions, humans would *contend* (now via Naiden)<sup>93</sup> that the omnipresent context of the gods was both the ‘end’ and ‘motivation’ for their actions. For if sacrificial messages were more and more communal, the ‘materials’ effecting them were less and less essential, ‘in the lower world;’ and likewise, as the format of the custom was internalized and fit for repetition (via fire), the participants, the place and time were rendered inessential, uninformative. The culture, in proportion as it gains a kind of access (by consensus) to (conceits about) invisible domains of the iconic, everlasting (and political) identities, must sacrifice the lifeworld of the present as continual alterity (there is no perfect repetition, thus no sign, and no objective meaning); must suppress the Earth as finally indefinite (sc. *êpeiros*). Humanity proliferates a mediated image of the Earth, by semiotics (cf. headdress), by instruction in ideals; its generations, sinking deep in anonymity, impart their vital energies to maintenance of disembodied standards, ideologies, societal dynamics and machinery—in short, the ‘body politic.’ That body, like the proto-woman’s, is not quite inhabited, not actual; yet, as deceptive phantom, or as waking dream, it has the strength to motivate the forfeiture of all authentic presence, the immediate, and namely in the hopeless hope of actuating form. The very effort must be doomed to an indefinite extension; and the wasting of indefinite materials explicitly defines the new *biotos* (way of living) for humanity, accordingly.

---

<sup>93</sup> Naiden’s sources are predominantly literary and artistic, i.e. self-reflexive.

οἱ δ' ἔντοσθε μένοντες ἐπηρεφίας κατὰ σίμβλους  
ἄλλότριον κάματον σφετέρην ἐς γαστέρ' ἀμῶνται·

those drones, remaining in the covered skeps,  
devour someone else's labor.<sup>94</sup>

Herein the speaker, with seemingly outright misogyny, likens the marriage of woman and man to the bond of the drones and the worker-bees. Whereas the workers go flying afar to collect new subsistence from wildlife, drones will remain in their place and eventually squander the finding. And just so, the spawn of the sculpture “will not share the weight of complete desperation, but only of bounty”.<sup>95</sup> Regardless of archaic knowledge, we note that the simile (more so, its source in the natural world) would judiciously muddle the straightforward gender-dichotomy, seeing as indolent drones are the males in the species, and worker-bees female. But also regardless of gender, the both of them live *kata simblous*, i.e. in a counterfeit hive, as relied on in beekeeping. Slaving away to fulfill someone else's requirements then is the bane of the whole of the hive, in the bounds of a humanly monitored system. As context and construct, a skep or false-beehive appropriates all of the aspects involved in that natural process—the making of honey—pre-emptively, i.e. before there is something to take. The domains of continually wearying energy and of fruition are utterly sundered; the insects immersed in impoverished mortality garner no taste of the surfeit (*Koroios*), at which they take aim.

---

<sup>94</sup> *Theog.* v. 599-600.

<sup>95</sup> *oulomenês Peniês ou sumphoroi, alla Koroio* v. 593. *Koroios* can also mean insolence, taking or having too much.



# WORKS CITED

- Celan, P. (1971) *Schneepart: Letzte Gedichte*. Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Husserl, E. and Carr, D. (1989). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: an Introduction to Phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Olson, C. (1974). *Additional prose*. Bolinas, Calif.: Four Seasons Foundation.
- West, M. and Hesiodus. (1982). *Hesiod: Theogony*. Oxford: Clarendon Pr.
- Stocking, C. (2017). Hesiod in Paris: Justice, Truth, and Power Between Past and Present. *Arethusa*, 50(3), pp.385-427.
- Seligman, P. (1975). *The Apeiron of Anaximander*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Aristotle, and Tredennick, H. (1961). *The Metaphysics ... with an English Translation by Hugh Tredennick*. Harvard University Press.
- Aristotle. and Freese, J. (1970). *Aristotle, with an English translation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1966) Religion as a Cultural System. *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* pp. 1–46. ASA Monographs, 3. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Pucci, P. (1977). *Hesiod and the language of poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Spivak, G. and Derrida, J. (1998). *Of grammatology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. and Mallet, M. (2008). *The animal that therefore I am*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Kierkegaard, S. and Lowrie, W. (1972). *Training in Christianity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stevens, W., Serio, J.N. & Beyers, C. (2015). *The collected poems of Wallace Stevens*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Hitch, S. and Rutherford, I. (2017) *Animal Sacrifice in the Ancient Greek World*. Cambridge University Press.



Naiden, F.S. (2015). *Smoke signals for the gods: ancient greek sacrifice from the archaic through roman periods*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Burkert, W. (1987). *Homo necans: the anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Detienne, M., Vernant, J.-P. & Durand, J.L. (1989). *The cuisine of sacrifice among the greeks*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bremmer, J.N. & Erskine, A. (2013). *The gods of ancient Greece: identities and transformations*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Freud, S. (1978). *Character and culture*, New York: Collier Books.

López-Ruiz Carolina (2018). *Gods, heroes, and monsters: a sourcebook of Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern myths*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Macgregor, N. (2011). *A history of the world in 100 objects*, New York: Viking.

Jacob, H.E., (2014). *Six thousand years of bread its holy and unholy history*, New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing.

Hamilton, R. & Hesiod, (1989). *The Architecture of Hesiodic poetry*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Burkert, W. and Bing, P. (2001) *Savage Energies: Lessons of Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece*. University of Chicago Press.